

THE IMAGERY OF THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S

'IMPASSIONED PROSE'

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas De Quincey saw himself in the 1853 Preface to The Confessions of an English Opium Eater as the author of 'a mode of impassioned prose' ranging under no precedents that he was aware of in any literature. This 'impassioned prose' was formed with immense elaboration and art to express his visionary scenes from the world of dreams, and it is by this prose style that De Quincey lives and will live.

De Quincey was aware of his precursors in rich and stately melodic prose. Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, and, above all, John Milton, had written a harmonious prose steeped in rhythm, which worked upon minds as if by music, stirring the senses. They, too, could transport the reader from the mundane to the sublime in a smooth series of gradations. But De Quincey did claim to be the author of 'a mode of impassioned prose'. This mode may be designated 'impassioned autobiography'. It includes large portions of The Confessions, The Laughter of Lebanon, The English Mail-Coach, and Suspiria de Profundis. The Confessions are the quintessence of autobiography, and in these other works there is an unveiling of the writer's inner self. These essays are not, however, inclusive as examples of that mode. The majority of his works contain an element of impassioned autobiography. The reason is to be found in his character. It is the workings of man's mind that particularly

interests De Quincey. He records impressions, renders states of mind without particularizing the features of the precise person who had experienced them.

The interest of this study centres on the above-named works, and on the historical sketches The Revolt of the Tartars, Joan of Arc, Modern Superstition, The Spanish Military Men, ^{Nun} Early Memorials of Grasmere, and the account of the Williams' murders in On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts. These historical sketches may rank among the prose-phantasies by reason of their sustained splendour and power. Other works are studied for the light they cast on the imagery of these ten essays. A study of the Gothic romances and tales Klosterheim, The Dice, The Avenger, The Fatal Marksman, and The Love-Charm, for instance, and the wild horrific tale The Household Wreck, clarifies the significance of the imagery of darkness and mystery in the more intense 'impassioned prose'. The short comic tales The Incognito, The King of Hayti, Mr. Schnackenberger, and Sortilege and Astrology, show clearly De Quincey's faculty of using imagery to heighten the tone of a passage.

Though he writes in a medium ostensibly prose, it is for his 'poetry' that we read him. The passages which linger in the memory are such mist-shrouded scenes as the Green children looking, by the light of their flickering peat fire, on the darkness ^{outside} ~~astride~~ which has witnessed the death of their parents, as the slicing scimitar and trampling hoof fowling the waters of Lake Tengis with blood and gore, as the flames racing up the scaffold to seize Joan. Though shrouded in mist, these episodes yet clearly delineate an intense human emotion, such as the void of loneliness, or terror, or ecstasy.

De Quincey wrote in a 'Diary' kept in 1803: "I have always intended of course that poems should form the corner-stone of my fame." ¹ He gave a list of the poems, plays and tales which he had, at some time or other, seriously intended to execute. So far as is known, none of them was written, and it was no great loss, for their titles suggest a dismal array of the most stilted and artificial 'romantic' themes. The verse of De Quincey's which we have is small in quantity and, though eloquent, unimportant in quality. However, there is a significant entry in a letter De Quincey wrote to Wordsworth in 1803: "I well remember that it was Milton who first waked me to a sense of poetry." ² This 'sense of poetry' is apparent in his earliest published jottings. As a seventeen year old boy, De Quincey in his diary had written of an acquaintance, "There is something gloomily great in him; he wraps himself up in the dark recesses of his own soul; he looks over all mankind of all tongues." ³ Such passages as the following are prophetic of the dream visions of the days to come: "Last night I image myself looking through a glass. 'What do you see?' I see a man in the dim and shadowy perspective and (as it were) in a dream. He passes along in silence, and the hues of sorrow appear on his countenance." ⁴ Again, "I just said - 'My imagination flies, like Noah's dove, from the ark of my mind...and finds no place on which to rest the sole of her foot except Coleridge - Wordsworth and Southey.'" ⁵

11 May 26th, 1803, A Diary of Thomas De Quincey, ed. H.A. Eaton, E.L.H. 1936.

2. August 6th, 1803, De Quincey to Wordsworth, p.33.

3. April 14th, A Diary of Thomas De Quincey, p.146.

4. May 5th, ibid p.156.

5. June 15th, ibid p.209.

Indeed, De Quincey had struck up an acquaintance with Coleridge and the Wordsworths, and in 1809, on invitation from the latter, he became the tenant of their old cottage at the Lakes. He occasionally visited Southey at Greta Hall. So the essayist lived in the midst of Romantic ideas and settings, and at a malleable age, for he was twenty-four. The natural poetry of his mind flourished under these surroundings. Wordsworth probably influenced him more than any other writer. More than two hundred allusions to Wordsworth are scattered through De Quincey's works. His influence acted directly on the suggestion of the distinction between 'the literature of knowledge, which teaches, and 'the literature of power'; which increases sympathy with the infinite,¹ but De Quincey made this his own by elaboration. And, like Wordsworth, he opens the territory of the child's dreams and fears, of his wisdom and blindness, of his dawnings of the heart. The Confessions and The Prelude are both growths of a human spirit. The second part of De Quincey's life was a bitter one. He explored his own early life and his study of the growth and structure of the human personality in general is one he shares with Wordsworth. Both The Confessions and The Prelude are intensely personal yet objective in their mode of observation and presentation, and both are attempts to reveal, by the exploration of autobiographical material, common and fundamental aspects of the human spirit. There is a long backward look on life. With the Romantics the imagery is basic. They were conscious that when the creative impulse was given a free rein a power flowed through their poetry. This happened when they created imaginary worlds, and

1. Vol. XI (Masson) p.56.

expressed these fleeting visions in a concrete form. The only way they could make the imaginary world intelligible to the reader, and to themselves, was through the imagery. The imagery was a link between the known and the unknown; it was in fact the stairway to the stars.

It is for this reason that a study of De Quincey's imagery should explain the distinctive power of his 'impassioned prose'.

De Quincey was a Romantic dreamer. He saw the mystery of things: "...there is an inevitable tendency, in minds of any deep sensibility, to people the solitudes with phantom images of powers that were of old so vast".¹ He and Coleridge, in particular, amongst the Romantics, were well acquainted with German contemporaries. De Quincey's short tales The Fatal Marksman, Mr. Schnackenberg, The Dice, The King of Hayti, The Incognito, and The Love-Charm are in fact De Quinceified translations from the German. The Germans were concerned not so much with the things of the spirit, as with the mystery which attached to them. This feeling for the mysterious is shared by De Quincey. It sometimes dominates his work and its evocation is his chief aim. However, in the 'impassioned prose', he is seeking to penetrate to the truth beyond the mystery. A study of the imagery of this prose should lead to a recognition of his symbolism, and consequently to his vision of the truth beyond the mystery of existence.

De Quincey was always dreaming. The desire to fly from the present reality was an important factor in his taking of opium. This habit of opium-taking he shared with Coleridge. Both had

1. Joan of Arc p.395.

soaring visions, and both claimed that through opium a whole new world of experience was opened up for literary treatment. Can inspiration be induced? In the light of modern clinical reports it appears that the unusual elements in the work of such poets derive from their neurotic psyches and not from the specific effect of the drug. Jottings in his diary of 1803 show that de Quincey was forever a dreamer, that the faculty was his long before he took to eating opium.

It was natural that de Quincey's mind should penetrate and float in the regions of his own psychology. He was a man of intense sensibility, and a solitary being. The influence of Jean Paul Richter strengthened his interest in the inner life of the spirit and his belief in the importance of solitary reverie. The pleasure of God, he says in Suspiria de Profundis, is uttered "by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain." ¹ "No man ever will unfold the capacities of his own intellect who does not at least checker his life with solitude," ² he wrote.

The intellect is regarded as of greater importance by de Quincey than it is by his contemporaries. He saw the Romantics reversing the error of the pseudo-classicists by exaggerating the importance of sense impressions and by underestimating the importance of constructive brain-work. He feels impelled to attack the consequent fallacy that "the savage has more imagination than civilized man". ³ When savages are figurative, they are so by mere necessity, he says. Their language is too poor to express any but the rudest thoughts, so that such

1. Suspiria de Profundis p. 365

2. ibid p. 335

3. False Distinctions, vol.X (Masson)p.443.

feelings as are not of hourly occurrence can be expressed only by figures. "Figurative language", he continues, "is no indication of imaginative power; it is one of the commonest expressions of the over-excitement of weakness...In all the specimens of savage eloquence which have been reported to us there is ever the mark of an infantine understanding." ¹

This statement contains the defence of his work against those who believe that the highest literature should necessarily be associated with the present, with the topical scene, and against those who believe that the mediums of prose and poetry cannot be successfully merged, and should not be merged, as De Quincey merged them. Behind eloquence must be understanding, said De Quincey. Style does not exist for its own sake. "The one (matter), he wrote in 1840, "was embedded, entangled, and interfused through the other" (manner) ² He wishes to reveal something in his 'impassioned prose' which can be revealed in no other way.

His recognition of the inseparability of image and thought, and of the vital function which the image performs, is apparent in De Quincey's perception: "Imagery is sometimes not the mere alien apparelling but is the coefficient that, being super-added to something else, absolutely makes the thought as a third and separate existence." ³ It was Ossian's falsehood of imagery that De Quincey discerned as the bardic poet's great fault, ⁴ and the diction and imagery of the Koran he regarded as being "in the childish taste of imperfect civilization." ⁵

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1. 'False Distinctions' Vol.X (Masson) p.443.
 2. 'Style' Vol.X (Masson) p.138.
 3. 'Language' Vol.X (Masson) p.262
 4. De Quincey to Wordsworth p.364.
 5. 'Language' Vol.X (Masson) p. 249.

De Quincey himself feels in a moment the analogies or parallelisms connecting things apparently remote. The richness of his imagery results from his accumulation of a vast store of knowledge from extensive reading and from the exercise of a keen faculty of observation. In the act of thinking anything, metonymies, metaphors, anecdotes, illustrations historical or fantastic, start up in his mind, become incorporate with his primary thought, and are, in fact, its language. A study of the imagery is thus a stepping-stone to the study of the thought.

Metaphor and symbol are the language of poetry. Metaphor is essentially an expression of an inward situation in outward and concrete terms. Broadly speaking, it can be said that, while metaphor reflects those inward events of which the poet is clearly conscious, and involves a conscious mode of thought and manipulation of words, a symbol reflects the stirring of massive intuitions inaccessible to reason. From a study of the imagery, therefore, may follow a discovery of the symbolism.

For the purposes of this study I define an image as the representation or similitude of a person or thing. De Quincey uses transferred epithet, metaphor, simile, metonymy, personification, and allegory, and so the definition is necessarily broad.

The counting of the images is of course quantitative and not qualitative. It is no evaluation, and does not distinguish the soaring, powerful image from the lame one. The number of images in a work is very much a matter of personal judgement, not only as to what constitutes an image, but as to what constitutes a 'dead' image, for there is much 'faded' metaphor in De Quincey's essays.

Many metaphors have become assimilated into the language, and are no longer thought of as metaphorical. So the passage of time makes the matter yet more equivocal. The value of an enumeration of the images lies in the emergence of analogies and parallelisms within works, and between different works, but the imagery must be studied, finally, as an element in the totality of the literary work.

This study owes a noteworthy debt to Miss Caroline Spurgeon's monumental Shakespeare's Imagery. Her methods¹ have largely appropriated, with one notable exception: I make no attempt to trace the writer's background and psyche through his imagery. There are, of course, deep-seated personal references behind many of the figurative expressions,¹ but I am primarily interested in the work produced. In the final chapter, where an attempt is made to place De Quincey, from an examination of imagery, amongst his Romantic contemporaries, Sir Maurice Bowra's The Romantic Imagination was of great assistance. My own reading of the poetry of the Romantics, and my study of the imagery, largely confirms the general conclusions he arrives at in his book.

1. 'The Case of Trophonius', Brooks Wright, Nineteenth Century Fiction, New York, 1963.

I. THE FLUX OF LIFE

The flux of life fascinated De Quincey. He dwells particularly on the aspects of the world of childhood, the experience of death, and the mystery of existence. It was his sense of invisible powers sustaining the universe, working through and in the visible world, which made him so conscious of the transitory nature of man's existence on earth. Imagery of heaven and earth is frequently juxtaposed. It was the mutability of life which De Quincey cherished. This is illustrated in his reply to Byron's contemptuous designation of the ~~Lake~~ ^{Pond} poets as 'the ~~Lake~~ poets': "The effect of transforming a living image - an image of restless motion - into an image of foul stagnation was tangibly apprehensible."

Water provided De Quincey with a field of endless variation for illustrating the flux of life. Whether as a pouring torrent, a gentle brook, a trickle in a fountain, or a vast sea, it forms a protean backdrop to the works of 'impassioned prose'.

His keen sense of the ebb and flow of life is overtly expressed in The English Mail-Coach: "to delay the king's message on the high road - to interrupt the great respirations, ebb and flood, 'systole' and 'diastole' of the national intercourse," ² is the greatest of crimes. Whilst riding on a mail-coach hurtling through the night, he is aware of a "central intellect" which "overrides all obstacles into one steady co-operation to a national result." ³ In the

1. The Confessions p. 75.

2. The English Mail-Coach p.280.

3. ibid p.272

supersession of the mail-coach by the steam-engine, De Quincey sees the passing of the power of great news to immediately kindle in men an electric feeling of national grandeur, for "the drowds attending at a railway station have as little unity as running water".¹

The first vision which the sight of the sudden death of an innocent girl arouses in De Quincey is, significantly, one of himself floating with her on a vast and tranquil sea, she upon a fairy pinnacle and he upon an English three-decker. There is joy and festivity on the pinnacle; slowly she nears the three-decker, and disappears beneath the shadow of the mighty bows. Then, "as at some signal from heaven",² all is hushed. The revel and the revellers are gone. The sea rocks. Upon its surface sit mighty mists, grouping themselves into arches and long cathedral aisles. Round one of these runs a frigate right across his course. She wheels off without a shock. High amongst the shrouds stands the lady of the pinnacle. She raises "at intervals one hand to heaven",³ then all is hidden in driving showers. He sleeps that night in a boat moored to the shore. Funeral bells tolling in the distance awake him at dawn. The girl is running along the sand in panic from something. He shouts to warn her of the quicksand ahead, but she flies towards the peril. Then, "the pitying heavens look down on one white marble arm, till "the funeral bells from the desert seas...sang a requiem over the grave of the buried child, and over her blighted dawn."⁴

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| 1. | <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p.284 |
| 2. | ibid | p.319 |
| 3. | ibid | p.320 |
| 4. | ibid | p.321 |

In Suspiria de Profundis De Quincey sees a great danger descending on mankind from man's advance in mechanism while his spiritual state stagnates or declines. Forces in the direction of religion or profound philosophy, he says, should "radiate centrifugally against this storm of life so perilously centripetal towards the vortex of the merely human." ¹ The image of the whirlpool is used again to illustrate the tyranny which opium exercised over him. "Twice I sank," he says, "twice I rose again. A third time I sank." This was "the situation of one escaping by some refluent current from the maelstrom roaring for him in the distance, who finds suddenly that this current is but an eddy wheeling round upon the same maelstrom." ² A digression on the vacillation of literary favour draws a comparison to the alternating successions of the *Arctusa* and the English river Mole, and to "the undulating Sicilian river motions of a flattened stone which children cause to skim the breast of a river, now diving below the water, now grazing its surface, sinking heavily into darkness, rising buoyantly into light, through a long vista of alternation." ³ At the close he uses a water image to point the theme of the decay of spiritual values. The dying mother warns her children against an alienation of interest from all spiritual objects "in the event of life flaring in too profound a stream of prosperity." ⁴

Sudden death is a recurrent subject in De Quincey's work. He usually associates it with the sufferings of the innocent, as in The English Mail-Coach and Early Memorials of Grasmere. In the

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| 1. | <u>Suspiria de Profundis</u> | p.334 |
| 2. | ibid. | p.337 |
| 3. | ibid. | p.343 |
| 4. | ibid. | p.355 |

latter essay he carefully paints the surroundings of the Green family in the little ~~family~~^{valley} of Easedale, a beautiful area with small fields separated sometimes by hedgerows, "sometimes by little sparkling, pebbly 'becks', lustrous to the very bottom, and not too broad for a child's flying leap, and sometimes by wild self-sown woodlands of birch, alder, holly, mountain ash, and hazel, that meander through the valley...¹ The vale must have an outlet, he says, "since without water it would not be habitable, and running water must force an egress for itself, and, consequently, an ingress for the reader and myself."² Towering high on all sides are mountain barriers; a foaming torrent pours down a rocky recess with an alpine violence, and beyond is a gloomily sublime tarn. Here is utter desolation and disorder - "rock and heath, heath and rock, tossed about in monstrous confusion."³ But in the midst of it life flows inexorably on.

George and Sarah Green have six small children. They leave them one morning to attend a sale of furniture in Langdale, a village six miles from Easedale by a short cut. Snow lies on the ground, but they have no trouble reaching their destination. In due time "the meeting melted away".⁴ On their return journey the Greens disappear. That night the six Green children sit by a peat fire, listening to every sound with anxiety, fearful for their parents. The eldest daughter Agnes, with her brothers and sisters, "seemed foundering simultaneously with her parents in one mighty darkness."⁵ Some time after midnight, however, "the moon arose, and shed a torrent of light upon the Langdale fells, which had

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| 1. | "Early Memorials of Grasmere" | p.127 |
| 2. | ibid. | p.128 |
| 3. | ibid. | p.128 |
| 4. | ibid. | p.133 |
| 5. | ibid. | p.148 |

already, long hours before, witnessed in darkness the death of their parents." ¹ The 'torrent of light' symbolizes the continuation of the life blood of George and Sarah. Water, in the form of snow, has led to the deaths of the parents. It destroys life, as well as sustains it. The neighbours pour "showers of bounty" ² on the children, and "overflowing offering" ² to the memory of the parents, which would pursue the children steadily until they were settled in life. It is significant that at the funeral De Quincey remarks some snow lying on the ground. It reminds men of that night when death struck down the innocent. In the reprint of 1854, De Quincey adds a paragraph to his original account of this tragedy which appeared in September, 1839. In the intervening years the incident has acquired an even greater grandeur in his mind. He refers to "its ups and downs, its lights and shadows, and its fitful alternations of grandeur derived from mountain solitude and of humility derived from the very lowliest poverty." ³

The vividness which the slaughter of the Kalmucks and the Bashkir in the waters of Lake Tengis, ^{drew} evoked from De Quincey in his Revolt of the Tartars, must be derived in part from his fascination with the flux of life. Sudden death is on the grand scale in this horrifying scene. Thousands upon thousands of people, noble and pauper, friend and enemy, plunge in a mass into the waters of Lake Tengis, thinking only to quench their thirst and allay the heat which has blackened them and killed hundreds of their fellows. They are butchered in the very process of sustaining life. Every

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1. "Early Memorials of Grasmere" p.134
 2. ibid. p.143
 3. ibid. p.148

moment fresh myriads rush in and swallow the water stained with death's red.

Imagery of flux similarly runs through De Quincey's narration of the Williams's murders to culminate in an image of the triumph of life. Williams extinguishes many lives, but always the tide of life turns up his deeds, and his capture is inevitable. The tendency of those who fall victims to Williams is first "to sink into the all-conquering hands of the mighty murderer,"¹ but, on the murder of the ² ~~Mases~~ becoming known, "a stream of people poured down into the kitchen;"² "with this mighty tide of pity and indignation pointing backwards to the dreadful past, there mingled also in the thoughts of reflecting persons an undercurrent of fearful expectations for the immediate future;"³ the flux stops momentarily for the journeyman under fear of death - "he has changed into a pillar of ice,"⁴ but it surges back with the people entering the Williamson house "like a torrent."⁵ Williams is eventually buried at "the conflux of four roads..., with a stake driven through his heart. And over him drives for ever the uproar of unresting London!"⁶

De Quincey's final vision in Joan of Arc ends on a similar counterpointing of death and life. When the gates of death are opening for Joan and the Bishop of Beauvais, and their flesh is resting from its struggles, "both sink together into sleep."⁷ As the shepherd girl enters her last dream she sees the fountain of ^D Romsemy. This takes the reader's mind back to Joan's early days as

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1. "On Murder" p. 93
 2. "On Murder" p. 93
 3. "On Murder" p. 96
 4. "On Murder" p. 102
 5. "On Murder" p. 113
 6. "On Murder" p. 124
 7. "Joan of Arc" p. 414

a peasant girl, before she glorified and tortured her life on the battlefields of France. "The Champagne of Champagne," De Quincey had told us, "never, by any chance, flowed into the fountain of Romsemy, from which only she drank." ¹ This fountain stood on the brink of a boundless forest, a forest haunted by fairies, where Joan had heard cataracts and rapids roaring ahead, prefiguring storms in her life.

As the bishop enters his final dream, he also sees Romsemy. The fountain shows itself to his eyes in pure morning dew. But this water cannot "cleanse away the bright spots of innocent blood upon its surface." ² Beside the fountain sits a woman, with wasted, blackened features.

The fountain has become a symbol of something beyond the flux of life, of an eternal purity. Joan has acted as a minister of God's words. She is associated with the fountain. The bishop, as a minister of God who has betrayed his trust, turns from his vision of Joan and the fountain with a groan, seeking rest in the forest. But there is no rest in that secluded place. The fountain stands on the brink of the forest, and God's presence radiates from it. The bishop is only increasingly mortified by his sins.

In the final section of the "Dream-Fugue" in The English Mail-Coach, the fountain is a symbol of the harmony of God, and harmony transcending the discords of life. De Quincey's final vision of sudden death is of a merging of all the fugue-elements, columns of heart-shattering music rising from the golden tubes of an organ "as from fountains unfathomable." ³ This is a sound of triumph. God has

1. "Joan of Arc" pp. 389-390

2. Joan of Arc p. 415

3. The English Mail-Coach p. 326

snatched the girl "back from ruin," ¹ and emblazoned in her
 "deliverance the endless resurrection of His love!" ²

Flux was a characteristic of De Quincey's own life. He was a wanderer. In 1800 he went on a tour of England and Ireland with the young Lord Westport that lasted five months. For several months in 1802 he wandered round Wales. He arrived in London late in November of that year, and for months he roamed haggardly around the great city. In youth and middle age De Quincey was too poor to travel far, but it was nothing for him to cover twenty miles a day in his ramblings round the lakes. This love of wandering is connected with a feeling of infinity and the endless passing of limits. De Quincey's children were infected with the wanderlust. In 1837, when his wife died, he was left with six children. Of these, the eldest son Horace died in China in 1842; Paul Frederick De Quincey settled in New Zealand in 1861, and his other son left Lasswade; Margaret, his eldest daughter, married and went to Ireland in 1853, and Florence, the next one, two years later, went out to India and married.

In The Confessions, De Quincey sees his journey through life as a voyage on unfamiliar waters, subject to the influence of unknown currents and winds. Coleridge and he, he says, as regards their initiation into the use of opium, "are embarked in the self-same boat;" ³ "Oh heavens! that it should be possible for a child not seventeen years old,...., by a motion this way or that, to change the currents of his destiny..." ⁴ The death of his father, and his selection of guardians for his six children, appears to De Quincey as

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| 1. <u>The English Mail Coach</u> | p. 327 |
| 2. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 327 |
| 3. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 16 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 22 |

analogous to the dying father of Pagan days making "signals for 'convoy'" for his little household of infants, a little fleet (as it might be represented) of fairy pinnaces, just raising their anchors in preparation for crossing the mighty deeps of life."

"Some one or two (at best imperfectly known to him), amongst those who traversed the same seas, he accepted in that character; but doubtfully, sorrowfully, fearfully; and at the very moment when the faces of his children were disappearing amongst the vapours of death, the miserable thought would cross his prophetic soul - that too probably this pretended 'convoy', under the strong temptation of the case, might eventually become pirates; robbers at the least; and by possibility wilful misleaders to the inexperience of his children." ¹

For a time De Quincey was a guest of the K - s in Manchester, but now, he says, "I am myself the sole relic from that household sanctuary - ... - that concealed, as in some ark floating on solitary seas, eight persons, since called away, all except myself..." ² On receiving his guardian's last communication, De Quincey suspects "that he had just reached the last inch of his patience, or (in nautical diction) had 'paid out' the entire cable by which he swung." ³ On resolving to leave Manchester Grammar

School, De Quincey decides "to steer a course for St. John's Priory." ⁴ The morning comes which is to launch him into the world. He sets off on the tide. At Banger, a small town in Carnarvonshire, he finds the bishop "was really as much of an autocrat as the post-captain on the quarter-deck of his own vessel," ⁵ but had the man

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1. The Confessions p. 25
 2. ibid. p. 37
 3. ibid. p. 69
 4. ibid. p. 78
 5. ibid. p. 121

replied to his Greek, De Quincey muses, "then I figured to myself the inevitable result - the episcopal hulk lying motionless on the water like a huge three-decker, not able to return a gun, whilst I, as a light agile frigate, should have sailed round and round him, and raked him at pleasure, as opportunity offered." ¹ At this time, he says, he sailed alternately "upon the high-priced and the low-priced tack," ² "but suddenly I took a fierce resolution to sacrifice my weekly allowance, to slip my anchor, and to throw myself in desperation upon London." ³ So he determines to launch himself on the boundless ocean of London, with a Welsh friend, one "whose whole nature, wild and refractory, ran headlong into intellectual channels." ⁴ Such a large provincial library as this man keeps "speaks as if by records of storms, and through dim mementoes of half-forgotten shipwrecks. Real shipwrecks present often such incoherent libraries on the floors of the hungry sea. Magnificent is the library that sleeps unvexed by criticism at the bottom of the ocean, Indian or Atlantic, from the mere annual contributions and keepsakes, the never-ending 'Forget-me-nots' of mighty English India-men." ⁵ Such an image would occur to De Quincey as the voyager through life.

Some of De Quincey's rambles in London led him great distances, and he attempted to steer homewards upon nautical principles, by fixing his eye on the pole-star, and seeking ambitiously for a north-west passage; but sometimes, instead of circumnavigating all

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| 1. | <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 121 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 130 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 134 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 136 |
| 5. | ibid. | pp. 136-137 |

the capes and headlands he had passed on his outward voyage, he came suddenly upon knotty problems of alleys, and alleys without soundings. At such times he could almost believe that he must be the first discoverer of these 'terra incognitae', and doubted whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London.¹ For the eight years between 1804 and 1812, De Quincey took opium in such quantity "that I might well have bathed and swum in it."² "He who summons me, he says, "to send out a large freight of self-denial and mortification upon any cruising voyage of moral improvement, must make it clear to my understanding that the concern is a hopeful one."² He is adamant that no old gentleman with a snow-white beard can make him surrender his opium. The reader is taken with him on his voyage when he says, "This being fully understood between us, we shall in future sail before the wind."³ This year of 1813 is for him "a year of brilliant water...set, as it were, and insulated, in the gloomy umbrage of opium."³ A little before this time he had dropped his daily intake of opium, and now "the cloud of profoundest melancholy"⁴ which had rested on his brain "passed away with its murky banners as simultaneously as a ship that has been stranded and is floated off by a spring-tide."⁴ For year after year, he says, "To and fro, up and down, did I tilt upon those mountainous seas..."⁵ He finds himself now, after a half-century of oscillating experience, nearly at the same station which he occupied at the beginning, and draws an analogy between veteran opium-eaters and seamen, a considerable portion of whom "do not recover their sea-legs till some days after getting afloat."⁶

1. The Confessions p. 192

2. ibid. p. 196

3. ibid. p. 200

4. ibid. p. 201

5. The Confessions p. 215

6. ibid. p. 216

The waters in De Quincey's dreams gradually changed their character - "from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they became seas and oceans...now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to reveal itself; the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces, imploring wrathful, despairing; faces that surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations: infinite was my agitation; my mind tossed, as it seemed, upon the billowy ocean, and weltered upon the weltering waves." ¹

The flux of life is thus seen as one of violence, sudden swirlings and whirlpools ever looming before the voyager. The life of the Spanish military nun is the very reflection of De Quincey's notion of existence on earth. Part of her life was in fact lived on the restless waves, and the title of the story when it appeared originally in 1847 was The Nautico-Military Nun of Spain. Maritime imagery flows around her. De Quincey sees her as a lone ship adrift on the sea of life, unknown currents shifting her course, deciding her destiny, till she disappears mysteriously on the waters.

Her father had given Kate, when she was a baby, to the nuns in the nearby convent of St. Sebastian. There is a degree of similitude here to De Quincey's own experience when his dying father gave him and his brothers and sisters into the trust of guardians. Kate runs away from the monastery, and commences her wanderings, just as De Quincey had run away from the Manchester Grammar School and wandered for months on end. She had thought out her escape carefully. "Though three-fourths of an hour,"

1, The Confessions p. 239.

De Quincey tells us, "Kate will have free elbow-room for unanchoring her boat, for unshipping her oars, and for pulling ahead right out of St. Sebastian's cove into the main ocean of life." ¹ Soon she is ready to cast off St. Sebastian's towing rope; ready to cut and run for port anywhere; which port...is to be looked for 'at the back of beyond.' ² She would not rest until she had laid the Atlantic between herself and St. Sebastian's. Life was to be for her a Bay of Biscay; and it was odds but she had first embarked upon this bilowy life from the literal Bay of Biscay." ³

Kate at one time finds herself alone in a sail-boat at sea. "But who's afraid? As sailors whistle for a wind, Catalina really had but to whistle for anything with energy, and it was sure to come. Like Caesar to the pilot of Lyrhachium, she might have said, for the comfort of her poor timorous boat (though a boat that in fact was destined soon to perish), 'Catalina vehis et fortunas ejus' ('You carry Catalina, and her fortunes.')" ⁴

On being rescued, she enlists as a soldier, in disastrous circumstances accidentally kills her brother, and is given sanctuary in a monastery for some days. But then "they turned her adrift. Which way should the unhappy fugitive turn? In blindness of heart she turned towards the sea. It was the sea that had brought her to Peru; it was the sea that would perhaps carry her away. It was the sea that had first shown her this land and its golden hopes; it was the sea that ought to hide from her its fearful remembrances.

1. The Spanish Military Nun p.165
 2. ibid. p.167
 3. ibid. p.173
 4. ibid. p.186

The sea it was that had twice spared her life in extremities; the sea it was that might now, if it chose, take back the bauble that it had spared in vain." ¹ However, as it happens, Kate does not go to the sea; she meets two soldiers, deserters, and joins their party to go over the ^{C.} Ardilleras. This episode strikingly points the sudden changes of fortune to which human beings are subject. The water imagery continues to flow round Kate. The party of travellers reaches "a hilly scene of rocky masses" ² and Kate takes "a sailors' glance at the bearings." ³ Water in the form of snow, nearly claims her life again, as it had claimed the lives of George and Sarah Green in Early Memorials of Grasmere, and as it claims the lives of her companions, who "sank and died." ⁴ Kate now stands alone on the summit of the Andes. Twice before she had stood in solitude as deep upon the wild waters of the Pacific, but now nobody can help her. De Quincey compares her condition, in some respects, to that of Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'. "She, like the mariner, had slain the one sole creature that loved her upon the whole wide earth; she, like the mariner, for this offence, had been hunted into frost and snow - very soon will be hunted into delirium." ⁵ "All the imagery of the mariner's visions," he says, is not "delivered by the poet for actual facts of experience; ... the imagery is the imagery of febrile delirium." ⁶ Kate's thoughts run back to the first words she had with her brother. She kneels on the snow and prays. Utter despair gathers at her heart, "but strange are the caprices of ebb

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| 1. | <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u> | p. 191 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 193 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 194 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 194 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 196 |
| 6. | ibid. | p. 195 |

and flow in the deep fountains of human sensibilities." ¹ The fountain is associated here, as in Joan of Arc and The English Mail-Coach, with the spirit of God, and the triumph of His works. Kate suddenly realizes that the worst is over, and "a pulse of joy began to thaw the ice at her heart." ¹ A flashing inspiration of hope shoots into her spirit, "a reflux almost supernatural from the earliest effects of her prayer." ¹ It was "as when a flood, that all day long has raved against the walls of your house, ceases... to rise." ² A long narrow glen appears before her; "as the dove to her dovecot from the swooping hawk - as the Christian pinnacle to the shelter of Christian batteries from the bloody Mahometan corsair - so flew, so tried to fly, towards the anchoring thickets, that, alas! could not weigh their anchors, and make sail to meet her, the poor exhausted Kate from the vengeance of pursuing port." ² Fortunately, she is seen by horsemen, who support her in a saddle; "her spurs...hung as idle as the flapping sail that fills unsteadily with the breeze upon a stranded ship." ³ The echo of Coleridge's

"as idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean," ⁴ is probably

deliberate.

The close juxtaposition of death and life which De Quincey sees in water is apparent again in Kate's tying the knot for the executioner, who is about to hang her, in "a ship-shape," orthodox manner." ⁵ The buffeted voyager in life disappears mysteriously. She is last seen climbing into a longboat with a number of others.

1. The Spanish Military Nun p. 202

2. ibid. p. 203

3. ibid. p. 208

4. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner ll. 117-118.

5. The Spanish Military Nun p. 219

De Quincey is obviously awed by the different moods of the sea, and its eternal movement. It is the supreme symbol for him of the mutability of life, and of life's "great deeps."¹ He dwells especially on its harsher aspects. "No excess of nautical skill will ever perfectly disenchant the great abyss from its terrors,"² he says in "Modern Superstition." Even the fountain has its wild moments. He speaks, thus, of sleeping and awaking - "It was as though a cup were gradually filled by the sleepy overflow of some natural fountain, the fulness of the cup expressing symbolically the completeness of the rest: but then, in the next stage of the process, it seemed as though the rush and torrent - like babbling of the redundant waters, when running over from every part of the cup, interrupted the slumber which in their earlier stage of silent gathering they had so naturally produced."³ As De Quincey looks back on life at the close of his Confessions, he sees that "the dread swell and agitation of the storm have not wholly subsided."⁴

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1. The English Mail-Coach p. 315
 2. Modern Superstition p. 418
 3. The Confessions p. 153
 4. ibid. pp. 247-248

II. THE WORLD OF STRIFE

"What is life?," De Quincey asks in The Household Wreck.

"Darkness and formless vacancy for a beginning, or something beyond all beginning; then next a dim lotus of human consciousness, finding itself afloat upon the bosom of waters without a shore; then a few sunny smiles and many tears; a little love and infinite strife; whisperings from paradise and fierce mockeries from the anarchy of chaos; dust and ashes, and once more darkness circling round, as if from the beginning, and in this way rounding or making an island of our fantastic existence: [that] the inevitable amount of man's laughter and his tears."¹

De Quincey's vision of life is one of a dark ocean on which the human being sails for ever, tormented by pain and afflictions. The sadder, the more painful an object is, the more De Quincey relishes it. There is an insistence on the inseparability of pleasure and pain. His Confessions, for example, closes with the juxtaposition of two sections, "The Pleasures of Opium," and "The Pains of Opium." On the practical side there is a search for themes of tormented, contaminated beauty. In Ann of Oxford Street, De Quincey finds a girl of warmth and kindness who walks the streets. His vision elevates her into the Daughter of Lebanon, a prostitute in Damascus who is received into heaven. The vision of life, he says in Suspiria de Profundis, fell on him too powerfully and too early. "The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth

1. The Household Wreck p. 158

with the heavenly sweetness of life." ¹ "Without a basis of the dreadful," he continues, "there is no perfect rapture. It is in part through the sorrow of life, growing out of dark events, that this basis of awe and solemn darkness slowly accumulates." ²

As life expands, he says, "it is more through the 'strife' which besets us, strife from conflicting opinions, positions, passions, interests, that the funereal ground settles and deposits itself which sends upward the dark lustrous brilliancy through the jewel of life, else revealing a pale and superficial glitter." ³ Thus it is that De Quincey's imagination shapes imagery of bestiality and imagery of beauty and glory into one undivided whole - the two are inseparable. This accounts for the sudden rise and fall of the tone of his narration. When the merging of the two elements is not complete, there is a jostling and an uncomfortable dichotomy. But when, as in most of the impassioned prose," the vision is complete, the prose works on our minds as poetry works upon them. Our minds follow De Quincey's with no sense of strain. This tendency reaches its furthest point in The Daughter of Lebanon, where the bestiality is only an abstraction from which the glory mounts and soars. This essay is a development from his account of Ann of Oxford Street, who was to continually recur as a sibyl in his dreams. As one of the prostitutes of London she belonged to the outcasts and pariahs of the female population. De Quincey's compassionate heart was outraged and wounded by the sufferings which society inflicts on its humbler members. The pariah is one for whom his deepest sympathy

1. Suspiria de Profundis p. 350
 2. ibid. p. 351
 3. ibid. p. 351

is evoked. He was himself a wanderer¹ with no real roots for most of his life, and recognized the prostitutes as "sisters in calamity"¹ to him. These women were products of life, and as such should not be reviled, he believed. The stream of London charity he saw flowing noiseless and underground; "the outside air and framework of society in London, as in all vast capitals, is unavoidably harsh, cruel, and repulsive," he says. Ann had restored him from a grave illness one night, and ever afterwards he wishes that the benediction of a heart oppressed with gratitude might have power given it from God to pursue her into the central darkness of a London brothel, or even into the darkness of the grave, there to awaken her with a message of peace and forgiveness, and of final reconciliation.³ Ann disappeared from him in a cloud of mystery, similar to the way the Spanish military nun had disappeared. She acquires a mystic significance in De Quincey's eyes. He thinks of her living in the grave of a Magdalene, a girl whose basic human goodness was not crushed by the machinations of the wicked. She is finally exalted into "the Magdalen of Lebanon," a woman of transcendent loveliness, a flower that is ruined. She is lighted up by burning cedar boughs hoisted high outside her room. These cedar boughs play a similar role to that of the fountain - they are symbols of the presence of God on earth. In the purity of her infant days the girl had wandered hand-in-hand with her twin-sister "amongst the everlasting cedars."⁴ On the coming of the Rabbi to her sheltered rock, "the full radiance from the cedar torch fell upon the glory of a penitential eye."⁵ She moves in a stream of natural beauty.

1. The Confessions p. 157

2. ibid. p. 158

3. ibid. p. 160

4. The Daughter of Lebanon p. 254

5. ibid. p. 253

The armies of Christ muster to receive "some dear human blossom, some first fruits of Christian faith." ¹ The Daughter of Lebanon falls back a marble corpse amongst her white baptismal robes, and the solar orb drops behind Lebanon."

Pain and pleasure, ugliness and beauty, are never far removed from each other in The Confessions. The pain and suffering in his life stimulates imagery of pain and suffering, and immediately these images flow, a tributary of religious imagery runs into them till all sweeps along in a current of power and grandeur. Thus he sees Coleridge and himself groaning under the yoke of opium. His habitual use of opium he ascribes to blank desolation and misery, settled and abiding darkness. "Oh, spirit of merciful interpretation," he pleads, "angel of forgiveness to youth and its aberrations, that hearkenest for ever as if to some sweet choir of far-off female intercessions! wilt ye, choir that intercede - wilt thou, angel that figurest - join together and charm away that mighty phantom, born amidst the gathering mists of remorse, which strides after me in pursuit from forgotten days - towering for ever into proportions more and more colossal, overhanging and overshadowing my head as if close behind, yet dating its nativity from hours that are fled by more than half-a-century." ² On his last night at Manchester Grammar School, in a mood of pensive sadness as the light of the dying day decays, De Quincey recognizes the marvellous magnetism of Christianity for calling "up from darkness sentiments the most august, previously inconceivable, formless, and without life,..., but also, at the same time, by incarnating these sentiments in images of

1. The Daughter of Lebanon p. 254

2. The Confessions p. 21

corresponding grandeur, it has so exalted their character as to lodge them eternally in human hearts." ¹ It is this faculty religious imagery has for exalting a subject, and for giving it eternity, that commends it so to De Quincey. His grandest effects stem from the exaltation of a subject of human pain or hardship.

Imagery of water is one means De Quincey uses to build up such effects. Another is imagery of trial and punishment. He sees Coleridge, for instance, as a slave to opium: "Like Caliban, he frets his very heartstrings against the rivets of his chain. Still, at intervals through the gloomy vigils of his prison, you hear muttered growls of impotent mutineering swelling upon the breeze." ² The great principles of representative government and the rights of conscience he describes as "passing through the anguish of conflict and fiery trial" ³ throughout the seventeenth century. Until his guardian had inspected his summary of the sermon every Monday morning, and dismissed him from parade, De Quincey felt "like a false steward summoned to some killing audit." ³ He doesn't consider it any more a defect in his guardian that he lacked energies for combating evils now forgotten, "than that he had not in patriotic fervour leaped into a gulf, like the fabulous Roman martyr Curtius, or in zeal for liberty had not mounted a scaffold, like the real English martyr Albemarle Sidney." ³ The whitewashed walls of the Manchester Grammar School "were bare as the walls of a poor house or a lazaretto." ⁴ He resolves to escape - "I was, I had been long,

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- 1. The Confessions p. 84
 - 2. ibid. p. 20
 - 3. ibid. p. 32
 - 4. ibid. p. 38

a captive: I was in a house of bondage: one fulminating word - 'Let there be freedom' - spoken from some hidden recess in my own will, had as by an earthquake rent asunder my prison gates. At any minute I could walk out."¹ His room there, he muses, had been for nearly a year and a half "my 'pensive citadel'"² De Quincey continues to surround himself with imagery of oppression: he talks of reporters who might gibbet him to all eternity,³ compares himself to the prisoner at the bar,⁴ regards himself as a condemned subject.⁵

The chain is a forceful symbol of oppression for De Quincey, particularly in The Revolt of the Tartars and The Confessions. Zebek - Dorchi arouses the passions of his east audience by painting for them a vivid picture of Russia's designs to chain the Kalmucks. Their only hope lies in speed of flight from the overwhelming forces to the west. "Onward, therefore, the Kalmucks pressed, masking the lives of their wide-extending march over the sad solitudes of the steppes by a never-ending chain of corpses."⁶ This chain is a part of the price these people are prepared to pay to escape from tyranny, from "Russia the house of bondage."⁷ Was it, De Quincey asks in The Confessions, in ignorance of the dangers of opium that he became an opium-eater? Cases are not rare "that the chain of abject slavery is first detected when it has inextricably wound itself about the constitutional system."⁸ The angry clamour he hears on the river Dee incites him to ask, "was it the breaking loose from ancient chains of some deep morass like that of Solway?"⁹ There is always this sense of something wishing to break free associated with the

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| 1. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 72 | 6. <u>The Revolt of the Tartars</u> | p. 400 |
| 2. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 88 | 7. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 402 |
| 3. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 101 | 8. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 13 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 109 | 9. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 100 |
| 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 222 | | |

chain images. De Quincey's heart goes out to the free creative will against restrictions.

The yoke is used in De Quincey's imagery in a similar way to the chain. The yoke of servant and employer, he sees in the essay On Murder, is a light one in England,¹ and often a benign one.

The wild nations of the Bashkiss and the Kirghises bear the Czarina's yoke, in The Revolt of the Tartars, with submissive patience.²

The image unites mighty forces again in Joan of Arc: "France had become a province of England, and for the ruin of both, if such a yoke could be maintained."³ Always, on a Saturday night De Quincey says in The Confessions, he feels as though he was released "from some yoke of bondage."⁴

Imagery of oppression is particularly striking in The English Mail-Coach, an essay based, like The Confessions, on personal experience. The tone of the imagery switches in the course of the essay from playful to dreadful. In the first few pages De Quincey facetiously sketches a benevolent old gentleman endeavouring to soothe his fellows travelling inside the coach when those riding on the outside attempt to share their dinner-table. The old man suggests that, "if the outsides were indicted for this criminal attempt at the next assizes, the court would regard it as a case of lunacy or 'delirium tremens' rather than of treason."⁵ The box of his majesty's mail is inviolate - "no matter though the sheriff and under-sheriff in every county should be running after you with his 'posse,' touch a hair of your head he cannot whilst you keep

1. On Murder p. 82

2. The Revolt of the Tartars p. 399

3. Joan of Arc p. 401

4. The Confessions p. 191

5. The English Mail-Coach p. 274

house and have your legal domicile on the box of the mail." ¹

The carters blocking the mail-coach feel treason to be their crime: each individual carter feels himself under the ban of confiscation and attainder; his blood is attainted through six generations; and nothing is wanting but the headsman and his axe, the block and the sawdust, to close up the vista of his horrors." ²

When De Quincey's vision of sudden death looms before him, there is a dramatic change in the tone of this imagery. A poor mutineer is pictured, dying suddenly, but not without warning, having knelt down to gather into his heart the bullets from twelve firelocks of his pitying comrades. ³ Death as a traitor to one's country is reviled. ⁴ As the mail-coach sweeps down the first stage of the road towards the young man and woman in the gig, De Quincey sees all as apparently finished; "The court was sitting; the case was heard; the judge had finished; and only the verdict was yet in arrear." ⁵

There is no real contrast between the playful and the dreadful. There is a union in the mind of these his elements. They form an integral whole in De Quincey's vision of life, a vision of flux, and a vision of joy and horror.

In Suspiria de Profundis De Quincey wrote that "the rapture of life...does not arise, unless as perfect music arises, music of Mozart or Beethoven, by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtle concords." ⁶ This is exactly what happens in The English Mail-Coach. It is an extended image of the strife of

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| 1. | <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 278 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 280 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 302 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 304 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 313 |
| 6. | <u>Suspiria de Profundis</u> | p. 350 |

life, closing with the perfect rapture of one sound. Musical imagery runs through the essay as a constant, harmonizing accompaniment to the action.

The post-office service of the mail-coach speaks, he says, "as by some mighty orchestra, where a thousand instruments, all disregarding each other, and so far in danger of discord, yet all obedient as slaves to the supreme 'baton' of some great leader, terminate in a perfection of harmony like that of heart, brain, and lungs in a healthy animal organisation."¹ The mail-coach system particularly impressed De Quincey for the political function it fulfilled at this time; the mail-coach was the national organ for distributing news of the battles on the continent. This organ, the mail-coach, runs like a musical theme through the essay, uniting all classes into one mighty mass with a common feeling. The victories of England in the stupendous contest "rose of themselves as natural 'Te Deums' to heaven,"² and the mail-coach, consequently, "became itself a spiritualized and glorified object to an impassioned heart."² When De Quincey recalls the image of Fanny, a beautiful girl who often rode on the coach, "up rises suddenly from a gulf of forty years a rose in June; or, if I think for an instant of the rose in June, up rises the heavenly face of Fanny. One after the other, like the antiphonies in the choral service, rise Fanny and the rose in June, then back again the rose in June and Fanny. Then came both together, as in a chorus - roses and Fannies, Fannies and roses, without end, thick as blossoms in paradise."³

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1. The English Mail-Coach p. 272
 2. ibid. p. 272
 3. ibid. p. 289

Immediately prior to the fatal accident, there is a "general state of halcyon repose. The sea, the atmosphere, the light, bore each an orchestral part in this universal lull. Moonlight and the first timid tremblings of the dawn were by this time blending; and the blendings were brought into a still more exquisite state of unity by a slight silvery mist, motionless and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency." ¹

De Quincey's reverie is suddenly shattered by anticipations of disaster. He hears a noise ahead on the road; the coachman is slumbering, the horses are racing. They sweep round an angle of the road, and rush up an avenue "straight as an arrow;" ² "the umbrageous trees, which rose in a regular line from either side, meeting high overhead, gave to it the character of a cathedral aisle." ² This intense human situation of peril rushing down on two innocent young lovers has stimulated De Quincey's imagination to elevated imagery, and now the action is elevated to sublimity with the religious images. At the far end of the aisle is a frail, ~~seedy~~ gig, in which are seated ^{two} ~~his~~ young lovers. If the man fails, the helpless girl "must without time for a prayer - must within seventy seconds - stand before the judgment-seat of God." ³ The young man, for five seconds, "sat with eyes upraised, like one that prayed in sorrow, under some extremity of doubt, for light that should guide him to the better choice." "Glance of eyes, thought of man, wing of angel," ⁴ which of these could divide coach and gig? Perhaps he was whispering in his heart, "Father, which art in heaven, do thou finish

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| 1. | <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 311 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 313 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 315 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 316 |

above what I on earth have attempted.'" ¹ The crash resounds, and burns into De Quincey's dreams for ever: "From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night - from the pathetic blending of this sweet moonlight, dawninglight, dreamlight - from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring love - suddenly as from the woods and fields - suddenly as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation - suddenly as from the ground yawning at her feet, leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and with the tiger roar of his voice." ² Imagery of peace, religion, water, mystery, architecture, animals and personification is blended in this one sentence into a single vision.

A dream-fugue follows, founded on the preceding theme of sudden death. This is a polyphonism ^{un} ~~w~~riting the various elements of the essay in harmony. An amalgam of images rolls out, "funereal blights upon the gorgeous mosaics of dreams. Fragment of music too passionate, heard once, and heard no more, what aileth thee, that thy deep rolling chords come up at intervals through all the worlds of sleep, and after forty years have lost no element of horror?" ³

In his vision of the ships on the sea, and of the quicksand, he sees the girl disappear three times. After the last occasion, he is carried over land and sea to a distant kingdom, and placed amongst others upon "a triumphal car." ⁴ Tidings had arrived of a grandeur "that measured itself against centuries," ⁴ and "restless anthems, and 'Te Deums' reverberated from the choirs and orchestras of earth." ⁴ The 'car' waits for the secret word, which was

1. The English Mail-Coach p. 316
 2. ibid. pp. 317-318
 3. ibid. p. 319
 4. ibid. p. 322

"'Waterloo and Recovered Christendom!'" ¹ This word travels by its own light and goes before them. They now approach the gates of a cathedral which move silently back before them. The cathedral image in the narration of the actual accident has now been elevated into an image of an actual cathedral. They run for miles till a vast necropolis appears on the horizon. Soon they enter the suburbs, and, after sweeping round many terraces, recover "the arrow-like flight of the illimitable central aisle," ² where, from afar, a female child is coming to meet them, "in a carriage as frail as flowers." ² She has no fear, trusting in the mighty cathedral. De Quincey rises in horror at the thought of this girl being the ransom for Waterloo. But a Dying Trumpeteer, sculptured on a bas-relief, rises and sounds his stony trumpet twice; deep shadows fall between coach and gig, and they are frozen to a bas-relief. The flux of life is stopped. The trumpet sounds a third time, and life pours back into their channels again. The choir bursts forth "in sunny grandeur, as from the muffling of storms and darkness." ³ As the girl had previously clung to the shrouds of a passing ship, she clings now to an altar of pure alabaster. Her young man, "her better angel...that hid his face with wings," ³ "that fought with Heaven by tears for 'her' deliverance," ³ is kneeling by her side. By the glory in his eye when he raises his face, De Quincey sees that his prayers for her have triumphed.

In a mighty tumult of heart-shattering music, the discords

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1. The English Mail-Coach p. 322
 2. ibid. p. 324
 3. ibid. p. 325

and concords rise together to the heavens in a sound of perfect joy and rapture. As he looks back through the cathedral, De Quincey sees the quick and the dead that sang together to God, to the generations of man. All the hosts of jubilation overtake ~~he~~ and his companions. As brothers they move together towards the brightening dawn of God.

The acute effect of impending disaster in The English Mail-Coach is attributable in part to De Quincey's arrow images. In "The Vision of Sudden Death" the horses sweep round a bend and rush headlong up an avenue "straight as an arrow".¹ Disaster is imminent. The image recurs in the "Dream-Fugue": "with the fiery face of a quarrel from a cross-bow, ran a frigate right athwart our course",² and, after sweeping round many terraces in the vast cathedral, they recover "the arrow-like flight of the illimitable central aisle."³ In each case a girl is directly in their path, innocent and vulnerable.

This image, with the same associations of disaster, occurs in several of the tales. An "arrowy sleet of many-coloured fire riding through the night sky over Liverpool is read by men as the annunciation of some gigantic calamity, in the essay On Murder. In The Avenger one member of a night-patrol in the city saw blood flowing from under the door of Mr. Munzer. The other "saw, heard, and like an arrow, flew after the horse-patrol, then in the act of turning the corner".⁵ A reference occurs in The Love-Charm in a poem the

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| 1. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 313 |
| 2. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 320 |
| 3. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 324 |
| 4. <u>On Murder</u> | p. 73 |
| 5. <u>The Avenger</u> | p. 257 |

love-sick Emilius writes: "Amidst them flute-tones fly,

Like arrows keen and numberless;

And with bloodhound yell

Pipes the onset swell;

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To leave the victim slumberless,

And drag forth prisoned madness,

And cruelly murder all quiet and innocent
gladness." ¹

In The Household Wreck, the lover of Agnes sees she will never recover: "The arrows (of sorrow) have gone too deep..." ² The symbol operates more subtly in The Fatal Marksman. At the very moment when the devilish old soldier had taken leave of William in the forest, Kuno's picture in the house of Bertram, the old forester, fell down of itself, and, on William's learning this, across his thoughts "flashed like a fiery arrow the old soldier". ³ On the night of the bridal festival of William and Katharine, the picture fell down again, and this time a corner of it struck Katharine on the temple, drawing blood. Time, for William, now "flew faster than an arrow". ⁴ The blood on Katharine's face had revived in William's mind "all the sad images of his dream three nights before, when he had seen her face "fainting and pale as death; and near her stood the wooden-leg, his countenance overspread with a fiendish laugh of mockery. At another time he was standing before the commissioner in the act of firing his probationary shot;

1. The Love-Charms p. 448

2. The Household Wreck p. 210

3. The Fatal Marksman p. 295

4. ibid. p. 304

he levelled, took aim, fired, and - missed. Katharine fainted away." ¹ The arrow images, associated with these other references, prefigure the disastrous close, where the number of deaths approach those of Hamlet.

The arrow image is one of many military images running through De Quincey's prose. These images of war and arms occasionally contribute to a tone of power and horror, particularly in the account of the William's murders, Klosterheim, The Avenger, and The Household Wreck. But more often they elevate a subject comically. A strong vein of facetiousness runs through the prose, slight though it may frequently seem in the encircling darkness of De Quincey's vision of life.

This humorous vein is especially apparent in Mr. Schnackenberg. This is the story of the fanciful adventures of a sort of Don Quixote, a blundering university student whose dog, June, involves him in fight after fight. Mr. Schnackenberg may be, for De Quincey, a man tilting hopelessly against the pomp and malevolence in the world. His life is engulfed by strife, and De Quincey sees it as a military campaign. On his arrival in the town, "all the windows were garrisoned with young faces and old faces, pretty faces and ugly faces." ¹ His shoes are "neats-leather 'field pieces'." ² When he takes the wrong bed by mistake, the true claimant, also drunk, lays himself on top of him. "'D- n this heavy quilt," ³ says Mr. Schnackenberg, and kicks the supposed quilt into the middle of the room. "Now began war: for the quilt rose up without delay;" ³ but Juno rushes up on the summons of

1. Mr. Schnackenberg p. 314

2. ibid. p. 324

3. ibid. p. 333

duty, and carries "a reinforcement that speedily ^{turns} ~~hurries~~ the scale of victory." ¹ The whole population of the inn is brought to the field of battle. A hostile Mr. Schnackenbergger threatens the Mayor with "representing a retreat by forced marches towards a bell in the background." ² No Juno is present "to turn the scale of battle" ³ against the butchers' boys, so his master flees. Juno was beating up the kittens' quarters at the inn, and driving "in the enemy pell-mell into her camp in the kitchen." ⁴ Juno causes so much havoc that the citizens of the town are enjoined "to put the public enemy to the sword, wherever she should be found, and even to rise 'en masse', if that should be necessary, for the extermination of the national robber." ⁵ When Mr. Schnackenbergger rises after being derided by Von Pilsen, everybody thought he meant to decamp quietly. "Decamping, however, entered not into Mr. Schnackenbergger's military plans; he rather meant to encamp over against Von Pilsen's position: calmly, therefore, with a leisurely motion, and 'grandu militari,' did he advance towards his witty antagonist." ⁶ Mr. Fabian soon arrives on the scene, and challenges our hero to a duel for not surrendering Juno to him as ^{they had} ~~per their~~ ^{arranged} agreement. They have barely parried when Juno rushes in, knocks Mr. Fabian down and prepares "for a second campaign" ⁷ against his stomach. A forester kills Juno, and the two men, now friends, depart to the Double Barrelled Gun and charge the landlord to serve Rhenish and Champagne, and "fire off both barrels" ⁷ upon them.

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| 1. | <u>Mr. Schnackenbergger</u> | p. 333 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 348 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 352 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 353 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 356 |
| 6. | ibid. | p. 359 |
| 7. | ibid. | p. 362 |

The military imagery provides De Quincey with a vivid means of showing the battle of life, and yet its lighter moments. This is well illustrated in The Spanish Military Nun. On leaving the Convent of St. Sebastian, Kate goes to Vittoria, "and, like the Duke of Wellington, but arriving more than two centuries earlier, she gained a great victory at that place. She had made a two days' march, with no provisions but wild berries; she depended, for anything better, as light-heartedly as the duke, upon attacking sword in hand, storming her dear friend's intrenchments, and effecting a lodgment in his breakfast-room, should he happen to possess one." ¹ This ~~don~~ she visits was "all day long, as you may say, marching and counter-marching his favourite brigades of verbs - verbs frequentative, verbs inceptive, verbs desiderative - horse, foot, and artillery; changing front, advancing from the rear, throwing out skirmishing parties." ² In Paita Kate is escorted in pomp to the bedroom: "Far ahead ran the servant-woman, as a sort of outrider." ³ Before Kate and the two soldiers climbed the Cordilleras, they held "a council of war," ⁴ and "the small army resolved to slaughter their horse." ⁴ In his pursuit of Kate, the alcalde "took a mighty sweep, as if ploughing out the line of some vast encampment." ⁵

Two others of De Quincey's major works of 'impassioned prose' show this characteristic. "If therefore any man," De Quincey says in the essay On Murder, "thinks it worth his while to tilt against so mere a foam-bubble of gaiety as this lecture on the aesthetics

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| 1. | <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u> | p. 168 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 169 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 184 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 193 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 229 |

of murder, I shelter myself for the moment under the Telemonian shield of the Dean." ¹ When William's murders have convulsed the city with panic, De Quincey finds that to reach his neighbour, "even in her drawing-room, was like going as a flag of truce into a beleaguered fortress; at every sixth step one was stopped by a sort of Portcullis." ² If a person, he says in Joan of Arc, relents too amicably into reasons and arguments, one may raise "an insurrection against him that may never be crushed; for in fields of logic one can skirmish, perhaps, as well as he. Had he confined himself to dogmatism, he would have intrenched his position in darkness, and have hidden his own vulnerable points." ³ Before Joan could be allowed to practise as a warrior, she "was put through her manual and platoon exercise, as a pupil in divinity, at the bar of six eminent men in wigs." ⁴

However, there is no facetiousness when De Quincey's personal feelings are most intensely engaged in his subject-matter, as in The Revolt of the Tartars, the account of the actual murders in the essay On Murder, Early Memorials of Grasmere, The English Mail-Coach, and The Confessions. In these works the military imagery stretches out the actions to a magnitude immediately discernible to the reader. This imagery invariably deals with a movement of force. In The Confessions, for instance, De Quincey sees midsummer, "like an army with banners," ⁵ moving through the heavens. On the top of the river Dee he sees a huge charging block of water careering into sight, "suddenly as with the trampling of cavalry - but all dressing

1. On Murder p. 71

2. ibid. p. 74

3. Joan of Arc p. 384

4. ibid. p. 399

5. The Confessions p. 82

accurately - and the water at the outer angle sweeping so much faster than that at the inner angle, as to keep the front of advance rigorously in line." ¹ "The undulations of fast-gathering tumults" of his dream, he tells us, "were like the opening of the Coronation Anthem; and, like 'that', gave the feeling of a multitudinous movement, of infinite cavalcades filing off, and the tread of innumerable armies...Then, like a chorus, the passion deepened. Some greater interest was at stake, some mightier cause, than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms; hurr^ying^s to and fro, trepidations of innumerable fugitives, I knew not whether from the good cause or the bad..." ² The Confessions closes on a note of strife: "One memorial of my former condition nevertheless remains: my dreams are not calm; the dread swell and agitation of the storm have not wholly subsided; the legions that encamped in them are drawing off, but not departed; my sleep is still tumultuous; and, like the gates of Paradise to our first parents when looking back from afar, it is still (in the tremendous line of Milton) - 'with dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.'" ³

The body of man De Quincey saw as buffeted by the storms of life, an uneasy receptacle of the mind. Imagery of natural bodily functions is profuse in the prose, and often contributes to an acute sense of action and upheaval. The large group of personifications reinforce these images of the body and bodily action.

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1. The Confessions p. 100
 2. ibid. p. 245
 3. ibid. pp. 247-248

Imagery of violent movement is especially apparent. "Must I go and throw the girl away?" ¹ Bertram the forester asks his wife in The Fatal Marksman. This image of 'throwing' is a constantly recurring one. Images of violent movement follow quickly on each other in The Dice. When the second of Rudolph's comrades threw a six, in the tossing to decide which of the three shall die, Rudolph was "prostrated in spirit. Then a second time he threw a horrid glance around him, and that so full of despair that from horrid sympathy a violent shuddering ran through the bystanders." ² In The King of Hayti, Mr. Whelp's lawyer "laboured to prove that the art of catching a likeness was an especial gift of God." ³ The youth of a beggar in this tale "was now and then thrown in his teeth." ⁴ Mr. Goodchild, we are told, "jumped into his clothes." ⁵ He saw his daughter's lover as aiming "deadly stabs at the honour and peace" ⁶ of his family.

Many of these images are mere squibs, but they occur so frequently in most of the works that their accumulative effect is considerable, and there are some very imaginative ones. De Quincey tells us, for instance, in The Incognito, that the venison which is being burned, "when alive and hunted, could not have perspired more profusely, nor trembled in more anguish." ⁷ On hearing a furious noise at his door, Agnes's lover in The Household Wreck says: "Not for a lease of immortality could I have gone forwards myself. My

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| 1. | <u>The Fatal Marksman</u> | p. 287 |
| 2. | <u>The Dice</u> | p. 374 |
| 3. | <u>The King of Hayti</u> | p. 392 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 394 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 412 |
| 6. | ibid. | p. 413 |
| 7. | <u>The Incognito</u> | p. 421 |

breath failed me; an interval came in which respiration seemed to be stifled, the blood to halt in its current."¹ "I," says the narrator of The Avenger, "that previously had breathed no syllable of what was stirring, now gave a loose to the interesting tidings, and suffered them to spread through the whole compass of the town."² They are particularly evocative when they refer to De Quincey himself, as when he speaks of his recourse after running away from school: "In blind distress of mind, conscience-stricken and heart-stricken, I stretched out my arms seeking for one sole auxiliary."³

Swallowing is an action which De Quincey frequently uses as an image of something irrevocably, sometimes disastrously, gone. So Rudolph's fortunes in The Dice were speedily swallowed up by an idle and luxurious mode of living."⁴ "'And 'tis uncertain,'" Le Blanc says in Modern Superstition, "'whether he was swallowed up in the sands.'" ⁵ In the course of his introductory passage in The Household Wreck, outlining the torments assailing mankind, De Quincey says, "throughout the limits of a whole nation, not a day passes over us but many families are robbed of their heads, or even swallowed up in ruin themselves, or their course turned out of the sunny beams into a dark wilderness."⁶ The Indian melancholy, of the girl Juana in The Spanish Military Nun, was "swallowed up for the present by her Visigothic, by her Vandal, by her Arab, by her Spanish, fire."⁷ On learning that her son's regiment had been honourably engaged in battle, the fear of a mother was

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1. The Household Wreck p. 185
 2. The Avenger p. 238
 3. The Confessions p. 112
 4. The Dice p. 375
 5. Modern Superstition p. 440
 6. The Household Wreck p. 159
 7. The Spanish Military Nun p. 211

absolutely "swallowed up in joy." ¹ The astonishment De Quincey feels at his oriental dreams in The Confessions is soon "swallowed up" ² by a reflux of feeling. The final victory of God in The English Mail-Coach is a victory for him "that swallows up all strife."³ The image of swallowing is but one of many images of basic bodily functions which De Quincey uses to give vivid flesh to his vision of the strife of life.

The sense of dark forces brooding over the action is greatly contributed to by these images, particularly in Klosterheim, The Household Wreck, Modern Superstition, and On Murder.

The worst passions of the Landgrave in Klosterheim threw "a gloomy rather than a terrific air upon his features." ⁴ His enemy, the man "ever stabbing in the dark," he could never find. A "secret awe and mysterious terror...brooded over the evening" ⁵ of the festival. An almost identical image is used two pages on: "feelings of awe and mystery, under more shapes than one, brooded over the whole scene, and diffused a tone of suspense and intense excitement throughout the whole assembly." ⁶ The Masque is at length singled out in the hall, and every cavalier attempts "to unmasque the dismal secrets which lurked beneath his disguise." ⁷ At the convent, the Countess Paulina "continued to shrink from all general intercourse with the society about her." ⁸ The image is later applied to the pursuers of The Masque, when they "seemed to shrink" ⁹ at diving into the water after him. Paulina, in the carriage flying from the

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| 1. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 300 | 6. <u>Klosterheim</u> | p. 94 |
| 2. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 241 | 7. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 101 |
| 3. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 322 | 8. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 109 |
| 4. <u>Klosterheim</u> | p. 75 | 9. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 120 |
| 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 87 | | |

city, "awoke from the troubled slumbers into which her fatigues had thrown her." ¹ The Abbess, in delusion, "charged the blood of Paulina upon the Landgrave's head..."² An impression of mystery and violent action is conveyed by these images.

Their effect is similar in The Household Wreck. Shrinkings and recoillings from horrors, lurking bodies, and convulsions of a city, strengthen ^{the} and impression of brooding oppression. There is a subtle use made of the eye image. Barratt is one with a blind bloodlust who can also blind many of the public to his deeds. Imagery of blindness in the early part of the essay gives way to imagery of penetrating sight in the later. The narrator speaks of his "blind impulse". ³ He has feelings "of fond and blind affection" ⁴ for his wife Agnes, "hanging with rapture over the object of something too like idolatry." ⁴ He later comprehends in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye, and yet for ever and ever,"⁵ the total ruin of his situation. A servant-girl at their house, Agnes afterwards realized, had been in collusion with Barratt, and "other presumptions against this girl's fidelity," he says, "crowded dimly upon my wife's mind at the very moment of finding her eyes thus suddenly opened." ⁶ Agnes dreams of a righteous tribunal, and a judge that could not be deceived, a judge who "smote with his eye a prisoner who sought to hide himself in the crowd." ⁷ Towards the close the tormented husband is "unable to shut his eyes upon one fact," ⁸ - that Agnes would have urged him to abstain from acts

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1. Klosterheim p. 126
 2. ibid. p. 145
 3. The Household Wreck p. 163
 4. ibid. p. 173
 5. ibid. p. 190
 6. ibid. p. 214
 7. ibid. p. 229
 8. ibid. p. 231

of violence obviously useless. And, as it happens, his hands remain unstained with blood, for the mob carries out his vengeance for him.

The bodily imagery dwells on the dark powers in Modern Superstition, an essay which is mainly a string of historical anecdotes illustrating the persistence of belief in omens, supernatural coincidences, and the like. The name of several places was formally changed by the Roman government, De Quincey recounts, "solely with a view to that contagion of evil which was thought to lurk in the syllables."¹ He feels an "inevitable gloom which broods continually over mighty palaces."² "In the lowest classes," he says, "there is a shuddering recoil still felt from uttering coarsely and roundly the anticipation of a person's death."³ "words that were blind, and words that were torn from frantic depths of anguish, oftentimes, it was thought, executed themselves."⁴ The throwing of gloom, brooding dangers, and stealthy steps, maintain this atmosphere through the latter part of the essay.

De Quincey's account of the Williams's murders has a singular mood of lurking horror and death hanging over it. For twelve days, De Quincey sees the idea of one demon brooding and tyrannizing over the general heart.⁵ The panic "which had convulsed the mighty metropolis diffused itself all over the island."⁶ From his visualization of Marr resting "his wearied head and his cares

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| 1. <u>Modern Superstition</u> | p. 412 |
| 2. ibid. | p. 414 |
| 3. ibid. | p. 417 |
| 4. ibid. | p. 418 |
| 5. <u>On Murder</u> | p. 112 |
| 6. ibid. | p. 74 |

upon the faithful bosom of his sweet lovely young wife," ¹ he passes to the devil below. The icy horror which creeps over the servant-girl Mary² creeps over the essay as a whole.

A recurrent aspect of the strife of life as portrayed by De Quincey is sickness, of body and of mind. Madness, in particular, preys on characters in the prose. Mr. Schnackenberg's landlady reproaches him for riding into the bar "like a crazy man." ³ Emilius in The Love-Charm says, "Somebody once said that to a deaf person who cannot hear the music a set of dancers must look like so many patients for a mad-house." ⁴ At the masked ball, the pale bride darted along the gallery "as though mad, with rolling eyes and distorted face." ⁵ On the acts of the murderer in the Williamson house becoming known, "no picture of a maniac in flight of panic or in pursuit of vengeance would adequately represent the agony of haste with which he would himself be hurrying to the street-door for final evasion." ⁶ The spectacle of the warfare of the Kalmucks and the Bashkirs in Revolt of the Tartars "became too atrocious; it was that of a host of lunatics pursued by a host of fiends." ⁷ At the sight of hills and forest scenery, all alike rushed on "with maniacal haste to the waters." ⁸ In The Household Wreck De Quincey outlines the tragedies which can cause great suffering in life: "ship-wrecks and mighty conflagrations are sometimes, and especially among some nations, wholesale calamities; battles yet more so. Earthquakes, the famine, the pestilence,

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1. On Murder p. 81
 2. ibid. p. 74
 3. Mr. Schnackenberg p. 334
 4. The Love-Charm p. 438
 5. ibid. p. 463
 6. On Murder p. 108
 7. The Revolt of the Tartars p. 410
 8. ibid. pp. 414-415

though rarer, are visitations yet wider in their desolation. Sickness and commercial ill luck, if narrower, are more frequent scourges, and most of all, or with most darkness in its train, comes the sickness of the brain, - lunacy - which, visiting nearly one thousand in every million, must, in every populous nation, make many ruins in each particular day. 'Babylon in ruins,' says a great author, 'is not so sad a sight as a human soul overthrown by lunacy.' ¹ An escape for Agnes from her prison is resolved on in this tale, and the hero pushed forward in his attempt "with an energy like that of insanity." ² The tragedy De Quincey sees in insanity is the tragedy he sees in the overthrow of a human mind. He exalts the mind of man, for it is man's means of making something from the strife of life.

Man's mind is his means of approaching close to the spirit world and God. With the presence of God in man and nature De Quincey associates imagery of fruit and blossom. However, with those overcome by the strife of life, imagery of weeds and noxious growth is associated. Thus in the veins of William the murderer "circulated not red life-blood, such as could kindle into the blush of shame, of wrath, of pity - but a green sap that welled from no human heart." ³ But the noxious growth is itself the sign by which to recognize spiritual stagnation, and, by clearing it from one's life, one may reach to the eternal powers. The fruits of God are apparent in the armies of Christ mustering to receive the Daughter of Lebanon, "some dear human blossom, some first-fruits of Christian faith." ⁴ The

1. The Household Wreck p. 159

2. ibid. p. 217

3. On Murder p. 77

4. The Daughter of Lebanon p. 254

noble girl Charlotte Corday, "in the bloom of youth, that with the loveliest of persons, that with homage waiting upon her smiles wherever she turned her face to scatter them - homage that followed those smiles as surely as the carols of birds, after showers in spring, follow the reappearing sun and the racing of sunbeams over the hills - yet thought all these things cheaper than the dust upon her sandals, in comparison of deliverance from hell for her dear suffering France!" ¹ Joan, the poor shepherd girl, "rose suddenly out of the quiet, out of the safety, out of the religious inspiration, rooted in deep pastoral solitudes, to a station in the van of armies, and to the more perilous station at the right hand of kings." ² "Gorgeous were the lilies of France," De Quincey tells us, "and for centuries had the privilege to spread their beauty over land and sea, until, in another century, the wrath of God and man combined to wither them; but well Joanna knew, early at ^D Romsemy she had read that bitter truth, that the lilies of France would decorate no garland for 'her'. Flower nor bud, bell nor blossom, would ever bloom for 'her'!" ³ Joan faces the sufferings of life with faith in God, and her reward awaits her in heaven. She knew that "she would reap nothing from answering her persecutors." ⁴ When one of them asks her whether the Archangel Michael had appeared naked to her, Joan asked them if they fancied God, who clothed the flowers of the valleys, unable to find raiment for his servants. ⁵ Her wish is to restore the Dauphin to the

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| 1. | <u>Joan of Arc</u> | p. 407 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 384 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 386 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 406 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 401 |

place assigned to him by God, and to plant him once more upon his feet. "Certain weeds mark poverty in the soil," says De Quincey, "fairies mark its solitude." ¹ God's messages are peculiarly accessible to solitary people. So it is that the pure girl Joan receives His word at ^{Pr} ~~Komdemy~~, a region "thinly sown with men and women".²

A higher power is strikingly associated with the vegetation imagery in The Household Wreck. The hero had "elaborately ³ cultivated" his intellect. Agnes, his love, has "the blossoms and dignity of a woman;" ⁴ her complexion is enriched by "the very sweetest and most delicate bloom" ⁵ that he ever beheld. His love for her is "as profoundly rooted as any merely human affection can ever yet have been." ⁶ But, in a tragic hour, the happiness of his life gave way, "root and branch." ⁷ From the first he had had a "superstitious presentiment...of a total blight brooding over the entire harvest" ⁸ of his life and its promises. Vengeance for the wrongs his love has suffered now dominates his thoughts, till he strays by accident into a church one day. A venerable old man fixed his eyes on him, and said, "'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord'". ⁹ God exacts vengeance for him, and, by this display of His powers, brings the man closer to him. From the strife of life he advances towards the spirit.

Prince ~~Xebek~~-Dorchi, in Revolt of the Tartars, sees the Kalmucks pouring out their blood as young men in the defence of

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| 1. <u>Joan of Arc</u> p. 393 | 6. <u>The Household Wreck</u> p. 166 |
| 2. <u>ibid.</u> p. 394 | 7. <u>ibid.</u> p. 190 |
| 3. <u>The Household Wreck</u> p. 162 | 8. <u>ibid.</u> p. 194 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> p. 165 | 9. <u>ibid.</u> p. 232 |
| 5. <u>ibid.</u> p. 158 | |

Russia, or more often in support of her insolent aggressions, and, as old men, reaping nothing from their sufferings.¹ Mid-way on the journey Zebek-Dorchí is prompted to ask, "was their misery to perish without fruit?"² But, after a year of memorable misery, they are placed in possession of new territories, and in comfort superior to that which they had enjoyed in Russia, and with superior political advantages. But De Quincey sees one great disadvantage amply to overbalance all other possible gain: "the chances were lost or were removed to an incalculable distance for their conversion to Christianity, without which, in these times, there is no absolute advance possible on the path of true civilization."³

Imagery of weed and fruit accompanies De Quincey's account of his spiritual passage through life in The Confessions. When he resolves to escape from his school, he says, "already I trod by anticipation the sweet pastoral hills, already I breathed gales of the everlasting mountains, that to my feelings blew from the garden of Paradise; and in that vestibule of an earthly heaven it was no more possible for me to see vividly or in any lingering detail the thorny cases which might hereafter multiply around me than amongst the roses of June, and on the loveliest of June mornings, I could gather depression from the glooms of the last December."⁴ He sees that "years far asunder were bound together by subtle links of suffering derived from a common root,"⁵ that the calamities of his novitiate in London struck root so deeply

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| 1. | <u>Revolt of the Tartars</u> | p. 385 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 402 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 419 |
| 4. | <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 72 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 175 |

in his bodily constitution that afterwards they shot up and flourished afresh, and grew into a noxious umbrage that overshadowed and darkened his latter years. ¹ "Yet these second assaults of suffering were met with a fortitude more confirmed, with the resources of a maturer intellect, and with alleviations, how deep! from sympathising affection." ² Often on a summer evening he would fall into reveries after taking opium. Through his open window he could see on his left the town of Liverpool, and, on the right, the multitudinous sea. "The scene itself was somewhat typical of what took place in such a reverie. The town of Liverpool represented the earth, with its sorrows and its graves left behind, yet not out of sight, nor wholly forgotten. The ocean, in everlasting but gentle agitation, yet brooded over by dove-like calm, might not unfitly typify the mind, and the mood which then swayed it. For it seemed to me as if then first I stood at a distance aloof from the uproar of life; as if the tumult, the fever and the strife, were suspended; a respite were granted from the secret burdens of the heart; some sabbath of repose; some resting from human labours. Here were the hopes which blossom in the paths of life, reconciled with the peace which is in the grave; motions of the intellect as unwearied as the heavens, yet for all anxieties a halcyon calm; tranquillity that seemed no product of inertia, but as if resulting from mighty and equal antagonisms; infinite activities, infinite repose." ³ From the conflict in life he rises to a peace. The opium habit has been rooted into his system, and has thrown out 'tentacula' like a cancer. He feels

1. The Confessions p. 175

2. ibid. p. 174

3. ibid. pp. 174-175

the pain of it, and he feels the pleasure of it, and from the interaction of these elements, he may soar to the sublime.

The vision of life, De Quincey had said in Suspiria de Profundis, fell on him too powerfully and too early. "The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth with the heavenly sweetness of life."¹ There is little difference for De Quincey between the child's and the adult's conceptions of reality - suffering has conditioned both of them. His imagery of childhood is almost invariably associated with torment. Thus he says in The Incognito, "the good man absolutely sobbed like a child,"² and his other works contain the references: "and he was like a child, letting them do with him whatever they chose;"³ "no progressive knowledge will ever medicine that dread misgiving of a mysterious and pathless power given to words of a certain import, or uttered in certain situations: by a parent, for instance, to persecuting or insulting children; by the victim of horrible oppression, when labouring in final agonies; and by others, whether cursing or blessing;"⁴ "when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever which, heard at times as they trotted along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven;"⁵ "the madness of the poor king (Charles VI) falling in at such a crisis, like the case of women labouring in childbirth during the storming of a city, trebled the awfulness of time."⁶ In The English Mail-

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| 1. <u>Suspiria de Profundis</u> | p. 350 |
| 2. <u>The Incognito</u> | p. 425 |
| 3. <u>The Love-Charm</u> | p. 452 |
| 4. <u>Modern Superstition</u> | p. 418 |
| 5. <u>Suspiria de Profundis</u> | p. 365 |
| 6. <u>Joan of Arc</u> | p. 392 |

Coach De Quincey speaks of the faithful earnestness with which a holy Christian Church pleads on behalf of her poor departing children, that God would grant them the opportunity of untroubled preparation for facing the mighty trial of death.¹ He feels deep compassion for human beings because they are in some sense and at some times the children of a divine father, their purity destroyed by experience. But his view of life is not a disintegrating one; man, by immersing himself in the hostile element and seeking to rise above it, may attain a spiritual wealth of far greater value than the merely temporal.

The mountain was for De Quincey a surmounting image of the ruggedness of human life, and of the unsuspected perils awaiting the traveller. The mountain imagery shows De Quincey's distinctive fascination with sudden death. Volcanoes, earthquakes, gulfs, and brinks dominate this imagery. "All was calm around the slumbering volcano,"² he says in Klosterheim. In the essay On Murder he quotes a fragment from Wordsworth: "'The earthquake is not satisfied at once.' All perils, specially malignant, are recurrent."³ In these natural phenomena he thus sees the flux of life and death. The mountain images, like the arrow images, are associated with a sense of impending disaster. Bottomless gulfs open before De Quincey's characters: to the terrified heart of Agnes in The Household Wreck is suddenly revealed the depth of the conspiracy "which thus yawned like a gulf below her;"⁴ Kate, at one point in The Spanish Military Nun, grieved sincerely for "the gulf that

1. The English Mail-Coach p. 303

2. Klosterheim p. 141

3. On Murder p. 96

4. The Household Wreck p. 212

was opening before her;" ¹ William's circle, in The Fatal Marksman, seemed cut off from the human world "as by an impassable gulf," ² The abyss is used similarly: the young scholar in Early Memorials of Grasmere "fathomed the abyss-like subtleties" ³ of Apollonius; every night, De Quincey records in The Confessions, he seemed "to descend...into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever re-ascend." ⁴ The brink is often used as an image in this way: both Mr. Tempest and Mr. Goodchild are placed on the brink of desperation in The King of Hayti; ⁵ De Quincey says it is one of his purposes in his essay On Murder "to graze the brink of horror;" ⁶ in Klosterheim there is a tread upon the brink of treason, ⁷ a standing on the brink of great explosions, ⁸ and on the brink of fresh, perhaps endless separations; ⁹ The Household Wreck has three similar images, and, in The Confessions De Quincey sees himself as standing "upon the brink of a precipice," ¹⁰ and bringing himself "to the brink of destruction through pure inanition." ¹¹

De Quincey sees violent and destructive things in life enabling one to soar to the world of the spirit beyond. He writes of incidents where tragedy seems to be taken to an absolute limit, "in which a single week, a day, an hour, sweeps away all vestiges and landmarks of a memorable felicity; in which the ruin travels faster 'than a musician scatters sounds'." ¹² Animal imagery provides De Quincey with an abundance of illustrative effects and elaborations of these rampant, shattering forces.

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| 1. <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u> | p. 213 | 7. <u>Klosterheim</u> | p. 10 |
| 2. <u>The Fatal Marksman</u> | p. 308 | 8. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 47 |
| 3. <u>Early Memorials of Grasmere</u> | p. 153 | 9. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 29 |
| 4. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 233 | 10. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 143 |
| 5. <u>The King of Hayti</u> | p. 403 | 11. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 150 |
| 6. <u>On Murder</u> | p. 70 | 12. <u>The Household Wreck</u> | p. 158 |

It was the headlong flights and the disasters associated with the mail-coach and the Tartars, that so captured his imagination, but the sense of the great speed of events always appealed to him: Mr. Schnackenberg, for instance, "upon the wings of rapturous anticipation...flew to the place of rendezvous;" ¹ The anticipations and preconceptions of Emilius in *The Love-Charm* "are always flying up out of reach and sight;" ² the velocity with which Williams disposes of victims and the speed with which the horror spreads over the land is strikingly conveyed in the essay *On Murder* by flying rumours," ³ an "almighty uproar...within ninety seconds maddening the population" ⁴ of the populous district, and, on the proximity of the murderer becoming known, "every door, every window in the neighbourhood, flew open as if at a word of command; multitudes, without waiting for the regular means of egress, leaped down at once from their windows on the lower storey; sick men rose from their beds." ⁵ His dreams move with great speed, as when in a room in a Shrewsbury hotel he is "assailed by crowding and evanescent images of the flying feet that so often had spread gladness through these halls on the wings of youth and hope at seasons when every room rang with music." ⁶ The swiftness of events in *Klosterheim* gives it much of its power. De Quincey relates this swiftness to the characters. *The Masque* glides through the book; ⁷ a succession of passions flies over the face of the Landgrave when he sees the Masque, and, later, "a race of passions had traversed his countenance, chasing each other in flying succession;" ⁸ thoughts fly rapidly through the brain of the Countess

1. *Mr. Schnackenberg* p. 349

2. *The Love-Charm* p. 446

3. *On Murder* p. 95

4. *ibid.* p. 108

5. *On Murder* pp. 112-113

6. *The Confessions* p. p. 143

7. *Klosterheim* pp. 78, 85

8. *ibid.* p. 148

Paulina.¹ The very deer are seen "in sweeping droves, flying before the Swedish cavalry for a course of ten, fifteen, or even thirty miles,"² until they are compelled to turn by another party breaking from a covert.

With the animal imagery related to the gruesome acts in the account of the Williams's murders, there is a penumbra of horror. The extent of the horror Williams's murders of 1811 had generated in the population seized on De Quincey's imagination. He sees "the panic which had convulsed the mighty metropolis,"³ "all that mighty heart of London,"⁴ diffusing itself all over the island. Williams he sees as "a domestic Attila, or 'Scourge of God' - this man that walked in darkness,"⁵ and "asserted his own supremacy above all the children of Cain."⁶ This is a man "with a natural tiger character,"⁶ his "tiger's heart masked...by the most insinuating and snaky refinement;"⁶ a bloodhound,⁷ a lion stalking game,⁸ with the "fascinating rattlesnake eye of the murderer"⁹ and "a wolfish craving for bloodshed,"¹⁰ who almost netted "the whole covey of victims"¹¹ at the Marr house. At the Williams' inn, "one batch of banknotes he has already bagged; and is hard upon the scent of a second. He has also sprung a covey of golden coins."¹² Plans are laid "for catching the wolfish dog in the high noon and carnival of his bloody revels;"¹³ however, he escapes, "and the dens were innumerable in the neighbourhood of the river that could have sheltered him for years from troublesome inquiries."¹⁴

1. Klosterheim p. 137

2. ibid. p. 59

3. On Murder p. 74

4. ibid. p. 78

5. ibid. p. 74

6. ibid. p. 75

7. ibid. p. 84

8. On Murder p. 103

9. ibid. p. 89

10. ibid. p. 96

11. ibid. p. 89

12. ibid. pp. 106-107

13. ibid. p. 113

14. ibid. p. 114

The images of the essay On Murder recur in the other works, but here, as image follows quickly on the heels of image, a vast picture of bestiality looms before the reader. The images are so compelling that there is an immediate, overwhelming impression of Williams' awful power, lurking in the darkness.

Revolt of the Tartars, and perhaps The Avenger, are the only essays which can be compared to it for extended horror. Once again there is a consciousness of the immense effect the subject-matter has on thousands of individuals. De Quincey sees the individual impinged upon by tremendous events, caught up and tossed like a leaf in a hurricane. He has found in the flight of the Tartars a subject suited to his literary technique and flair. This is the flight of a nation across boundless steppes, from "the mightiest of Christian thrones" to "the mightiest of Pagan." ¹ The sufferings of the Tartars seem to him "combined as with the skill of an artist," ² and, "upon raising the curtain which veils the great catastrophe, we behold one vast climax of anguish, towering upwards by various gradations, as if constructed artificially for picturesque effect." ²

The essay becomes more and more a tremendous vision. The flight is seen in relation to almighty forces, those particularly in nature. De Quincey sees, for instance, in the unity of purpose connecting the myriad of wills, and in the blind but unerring aim to a mark so remote, "something which recalls to the mind those almighty instincts that propel the migrations of the swallow and the leeming, or the life withering marches of the locust." ³ This

1. Revolt of the Tartars p. 368
 2. ibid. p. 393
 3. ibid. pp. 388

image is an addition in the reprint of 1854. The events have acquired an even greater grandeur for him than they had in 1837.

The pace of the drama mounts inexorably. In keeping with the bestial behaviour on both sides, animal imagery comes thick and fast. The Bashkirs and the Kirghises "stuck to the unhappy Kalmucks like a swarm of engaged hornets,"¹ and, "indeed, long before the frontiers of China were approached, the hostility of both sides had assumed the appearance much more of a warfare amongst wild beasts than amongst creatures acknowledging the restraints of reason or the claims of a common nature."² The final scene of slaughter in the waters of Lake Tengis is one vast image of bestiality. It rounds off with concentrated horrific grandeur a tale which stands renowned for sustained magnificence of narration.

The notion of pursuit dominates Klosterheim, De Quincey's Gothic novel. A villainous Landgrave seeks the death of the son, Maximilian, of the rightful Landgrave, whom he has already murdered. Maximilian seeks the love of the Countess Paulina, and vengeance on he who killed his father and usurped his rightful position. As the mysterious masque, he carries out a series of terrorist activities in the Landgrave's town, to combat which the Landgrave calls in the help of his confidant Luigi Adorni, who takes pleasure in the subtlety he can display "in unweaving his own webs of deception."³

The imagery intensifies this theme of pursuit. The man sent to assassinate Maximilian is overpowered. Prostrate on the ground,

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1. Revolt of the Tartars p. 409
 2. ibid. p. 410
 3. Klosterheim p. 49

he gazes "as if under a rattlesnake's fascination" ¹ at the young soldier before him. "Snares had been laid" ² for Maximilian in vain, but the Adorni has "a plot baited for snaring him," ³ for "entrapping this public enemy." ⁴ A masqued ball is held. At the second of the gates which must be passed for admission to the ball, "the bearer of a forged ticket would have found himself in a sort of trap." ⁵ But The Masque gains entrance. "'This very night, I trust'" says the Adorni, "'will put a bridle in his mouth.'" ⁶ The Masque uses an almost identical image a little later to the fleeing Adorni: "'die first yourself! Or bridle that coward's tongue.'" ⁷ The Countess Paulina feels the "snares" of the Landgrave "gathering faster about her." ⁸ In a house at Walderhausen she hears a sick man raving; "Sometimes he spoke in the character of one who chases a deer in a forest; sometimes he was close upon the haunches of his game; sometimes it seemed on the point of escaping him. Then the nature of the game changed utterly and became something human; and a companion was suddenly at his side." ⁹ This man sees his hands bloody, and his victim starting up from his lair. The victim was Maximilian's father, assassinated in the forest when hunting, whilst yet a young man. Paulina, in her prison at Lowenstein, flees from her oppressors "like a dove pursued by vultures." ¹⁰ The Count St. Aldenheim says death at the hands of the Landgrave does not worry him, "but to be caught in a trap, and die like a rat lured by a bait of toasted cheese" ¹¹ makes his blood rebel. Near the close, the Landgrave

1. Klosterheim
 2. ibid.
 3. ibid.
 4. ibid.
 5. ibid.

p. 43.
 p. 81.
 p. 88.
 p. 90.
 p. 93

6. Klosterheim
 7. Klosterheim
 8. ibid.
 9. ibid.
 10. ibid.
 11. ibid.

p. 96.
 p. 103.
 p. 126.
 p. 131.
 p. 137.
 p. 142.

hurries on to where The Masque is trapped "with the haste of one who fears he may be anticipated in his purpose, and the fury of some bird of prey apprehending that his struggling victim may be yet torn from his talons." ¹ This imagery lacing the novel extends the effect of the intrigue, of the plots and counterplots forming the basis of the action.

De Quincey's tale The Avenger, revolves, like Klosterheim, round the pursuit of a vengeance, and, though there is not the same element of intrigue, there is some, and the essay has two images of snares: Ferdinand tells his priest, "'Do not you weave snares about my steps; snares there are already, and but too many;" ² Maximilian's father, serving in the campaign of Friedland and Eylau, "was caught in some one of the snares laid for him." ³

This essay is drenched in more blood than Klosterheim, and the animal images are more savage and vigorous. There is "human tiger-passion ranging unchained amongst men." ⁴ Ferdinand von Hamelstein, "like a bird under the fascination of a rattlesnake," ⁵ would not summon up the energies of his nature to make an effort at flying away. When Maximilian Wyndham kisses Margaret Lieverheim, Ferdinand rushes forward "with eyes glaring like a tiger's." ⁶ Margaret charms asleep "the worm which gnawed" ⁷ at Maximilian's heart. On their marriage becoming known, her name was "rescued from the fangs of the scandal-mongers: these harpies had their prey torn from them at the very moment when they were sitting down to the unhallowed banquet." ⁸ At the city gates a small sum was demanded for each of Maximilian's

1. Klosterheim P. 147.
 2. The Avenger p. 244.
 3. ibid. p. 274.
 4. ibid. p. 234.

5. The Avenger p. 243.
 6. ibid. p. 247.
 7. ibid. p. 263.
 8. ibid. p. 266.

sisters and for his mother, "as for so many head of cattle." ¹ On a printed board, "along with the vilest animals, Jews and Jewesses were rated at so much a head." ¹ Recalling the depravities to which they were subjected, Maximilian speaks of "the dog of an executioner" ² and "the roar of the cruel mob." ² His mother dies in the Jewish 'chamber of desolation', a room consecrated to confusion, "to typify, by symbols appalling to the eye, that desolation which has so long trampled on Jerusalem, and the ravages of the boar within the vineyards of Judea." ³ In his plan of vengeance, Maximilian hunted for some time in the forest with some carefully chosen men as his "beagles". ⁴ "The dog" ⁴ of an executioner he slew in the forest. To each of his victims he shouted, "'This comes from the Jewess! Hound of hounds!'" ⁴

De Quincey saw in Joan of Arc one who had transcended the strife of life to approach closer to God. Joan moves amidst images of soaring flight. De Quincey tells us of "the vast reveries which brooded over the heart of Joanna in early girlhood, when the wings were budding that should carry her from Orleans to Rheims; when the golden chariot was dimly revealing itself that should carry her from the kingdom of 'France Delivered' to the Eternal Kingdom." ⁵ The girl from Domremy, she who soars to the heavens, tears the judges' "webs of cruelty into shreds and dust". ⁶ A comparison is drawn with another noble woman, Charlotte ^CDorday, whose smiles are followed by homage "as surely as the carols of birds, after showers in spring, follow the reappearing sun and the racing of sunbeams over the hills". ⁷ At her burning, a fanatic English soldier who had sworn to throw a

1. The Avenger p. 275.
 2. ibid. p. 278.
 3. ibid. p. 279.
 4. ibid. p. 282.

5. Joan of Arc p. 400.
 6. ibid. p. 404.
 7. ibid. p. 407.

faggot on the scaffold, suddenly turned away a penitent for life, "saying everywhere that he had seen a dove rising upon wings to heaven from the ashes where she had stood."¹ This imagery of flight is closely related to the other imagery which gives a sense of a world above the earthly, of a divine power whose hand is ever extended to those who seek to find it.

In The English Mail-Coach it is the suddenness with which tragedy can disrupt human lives which strikes deep into De Quincey's heart. There is a concentration on speed in the animal imagery. For a time the Birmingham mail-coach, "the beast" with so much writing and painting on "its sprawling flanks,"² ran side by side with his majesty's mail, but then the coachman slipped his "royal horses like cheetahs, or hunting leopards, after the affrighted game."³ "Can these be horses," he asks a little later, "that bound off with the action and gestures of leopards?"⁴ To the proud mother of a trooper in the 23rd Dragoons, De Quincey tells how the men of that regiment "leaped their horses over all obstacles as gaily as hunters to the morning's chase."⁵ One senses the fox which will soon be running for its life. He goes on, "I told her how they rode their horses into the mists of death."⁵ So too, riding behind their horse, the young man and woman will soon be staring into the face of death. In the mighty cathedral of De Quincey's vision, the horses sweep round every angle "with the flight of swallows."⁶ As in Joan of Arc, De Quincey uses a bird image as an indication of the proximity of the hand of God.

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| 1. <u>Joan of Arc</u> | p. 413. | 4. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 294. |
| 2. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 281. | 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 300. |
| 3. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 282. | 6. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 324. |

The attention of the reader is focussed on one personⁱⁿ the The Spanish Military Nun, the heroine Kate. Her abundant animal vigour rides through the essay. Kate moves in a world of animal imagery. "That little human tadpole" ¹ is the unwanted child of "an old toad of a father," ¹ an "old crocodile." ¹ He places her in a convent so that "my pussy will never find her way out to a thorny and dangerous world," ² but he "had little care whether his kitten should turn out a wolf or a lamb." ³ As it happens, "No fox ever kept a henroost in such alarm as pussy kept the dormitory of the senior sisters," ⁴ and the nuns fear "that they might have been rearing by mistake some future tigress." ⁴ Kate determines to leave, and sees "with the eyeball of an eagle" ⁵ what she must do. She slips out and seeks a bed in the forest. "When the lark rose, up rose Catalina." ⁶ In the following pages she is variously described as "needing little more toilet than the birds who already were singing in the gardens," ⁷ an awakening tiger, ⁸ and one whose "fate would be that of an ox once driven within the shambles. Outside, the bullock might make some defence with his horns; but, once in, with no space for turning, he is muffled and gagged." ⁹ Kate "carried her eye... like a Hawk's, steady, though restless." ⁹ She locks a Spanish lady and Mr. Uguinza into "the rat-trap which they had prepared for herself." ⁹ The "little wild cat" of St. Sebastians later becomes "a lamb travelling back into the Christian fold." ¹⁰

The tiger, the crocodile, the snake - these three are De Quincey's supreme symbols throughout his essays for the fierce forces in life

1. <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u>	P. 161.	6. <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u>	p. 168.
2. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 162.	7. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 175.
3. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 162.	8. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 182.
4. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 163	9. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 185.
5. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 166	10. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 188.

which must be faced by man before he can ascend to the heavens.

"Southern Asia, in general," he says in The Confessions, "is the seat of awful images and associations." ¹ This he sees as stemming from its being the cradle of the human race, and from "the ancient, monumental, cruel, and elaborate religions of Hindustan." ¹ "Man is a weed" ¹ in south-east Asia. "The vast empires, also, into which the enormous population of Asia has always been cast give a further sublimity to the feelings associated with all oriental names or images." ² Imagery of dreadful animals came more and more to haunt his dreams. In May 1818 he records: "all before had been moral and spiritual terrors. But here the main agents were ugly birds, or snakes, or crocodiles, especially the last." ³ These animals are probably symbols of the evil to which he feels himself a party. At the end of 1816, at the age of thirty-one, he had married an eighteen-year-old girl Margaret Simpson. This young wife and mother had to nurse her opium-besetted husband through his most wretched years of 1817 and 1818. He said in June, 1819: "the weight of twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the expression of inexpiable guilt." ⁴

The Asiatic objects had also impressed De Quincey for the antiquity of their institutions, histories, and, above all, of their mythologies. Vastness, in whatever form, had always impressed him. The subject-matter of his essays always has an importance for him on a national scale. Revolt of the Tartars and Klosterheim are concerned with political events on a national scale; the horror and pity emanating from the deaths in Grasmere, and those in London at Williams' hand, spread over England; the burning of Joan of Arc is a crime of the

1. <u>The Confessions</u>	p. 240.
2. Ibid.	p. 241.
3. ibid.	p. 242.
4. ibid.	p. 245.

English nation; the renown of the Spanish military nun spreads all over Spain; he sees the mail-coach uniting England in a common feeling. His vision of the strife of life is widened both in space and time. The historical past has a fascination for him.

De Quincey has a great interest in the classical period, and wrote such essays as The Casuistry of Roman Meals, The Pagan Oracles, The Essenes, and Greece under the Romans. His knowledge of the history, language, and mythology of those times is immense, and many of his images are naturally drawn from them. They give a greater breadth, and sometimes a greater depth, to their subjects, and elevate the strife of life into something eternal, and necessary for the spiritual development of the individual.

It is extraordinary the number of references he has to caves, to great depths, in his classical imagery. He sees himself in The Confessions as one "whose disease it was to meditate too much and to observe too little... I was, indeed, like a person, who, according to the old Pagan legend, had entered the cave of Trophonius."¹ The cave of Trophonius was the seat of an oracle in Boeotia from which visitors always emerged pale and dejected, so that the place was proverbially associated with melancholy. The love-sick Emilius envisages a similar cave in The Love-Charm: "Thus capering and prancing,

All together go dancing
Adown life's giddy cave;
Nor living nor loving,
But dizzily roving
Through dreams to a grave.
There below 'tis yet worse;

1. The Confessions. p. 193.

Its flowers and its clay

Roof a gloomier day,

Hide a still deeper curse." ¹

De Quincey dreams in The Confessions of precipitating himself into the "unfathomed abyss" ² of London. As he looks out on the night it seems to him "as dark as 'the inside of a wolf's throat,'" ³ with "London expanding her visionary gates to receive me, like some dreadful mouth of Acheron." ³ Properly, Acheron is the river of the lower world, around which the shades of the departed hover, but more generally it signifies the whole of the lower world, and this is the meaning De Quincey gives it here. Again, he says in The Confessions he would often listen to "the heavenly and harp-like voice" ⁴ of the angelic Grassini at the Opera House, in rapture as she "poured forth her passionate soul as Andromache at the tomb of Hector." ⁴ Death, and the beauty which may arise from it, is associated again in his reference in The English Mail-Coach to the writing and painting on the Birmingham coach which "would have puzzled a decipherer from the tombs of Luxor." ⁵ The tombs of Luxor, like the cave of Trophonius, ^{are} ~~were~~ in Boeotia. Near this wonderful mass of pylons, courts, and obelisks, is the valley of the Tombs of the Queens, and near them the Tombs of the Kings, including that of Rameses III, the 'Harper's tomb.' There are references in The Confessions and Suspiria de Profundis to Delphi, a small town which was looked upon in classical times as the central point of the whole earth, and was hence called 'the navel of the earth.' An oracle was consulted in the centre of the splendid temple of Apollo. "If the

1. The Love-Charm.

p. 449.

2. The Confessions.

p. 143 - 144.

3. ibid.

p. 144.

4. ibid.

p. 188.

5. The English Mail-Coach.

p. 282.

reader has (which so few have) the passion without which there is no reading of the legend and superscription upon man's brow," De Quincey says in Suspiria de Profundis, "if he is not (as most are) deaf^{er} than the grave to every 'deep' note that sighs upwards from the Delphic caves of human life, he will know that the rapture of life... does not arise, unless as perfect music arises ... by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtile concords." ¹

The Suspiria de Profundis ('sighs out of the depths') is one of De Quincey's most characteristic works. He has plumbed the hidden places of his own heart, and out of ^{ff}suffering and torment has acquired a power of spiritual insight.

1. Suspiria de Profundis. p. 150.

III. THE WORLD OF THE SPIRIT.

There is always evident in De Quincey's 'impassioned prose' an awareness of the world of the spirit. He is interested in explaining the inner state of his mind; to reach out from the visible world to an abiding reality behind it. Immersion in the strife of life is seen as a blessing by him, as the means to insights into the world of the spirit, the mysterious realm of the Beyond. The faculty of dreaming, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, he sees as "the one great tube" ¹ through which man communicates with the shadowy realm. "And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, composes the magnificent apparatus which fixes the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of that mysterious 'camera obscura' - the sleeping mind." ¹

De Quincey was a dreamer, but not a dreamer living in the world of his own mind without interest in the behaviour of the world around him. To the end of his life he followed with keen interest the news of the day. An intellectual curiosity determines and strengthens the character of his great emotive moments. His meticulous artistry enables him to narrate his dreams as a continuous whole, without their becoming disjointed, and this power of

1. Suspiria de Profundis. p. 335.

producing cumulative imagery, a multitude of almost simultaneous impressions, is perhaps his outstanding characteristic.

De Quincey's taste for the strange, the macabre, the terrible, is an aspect of the fascination which the spirit-world holds for him. His feeling for the mysterious and his interest in the past, naturally led him to the Gothic novel. The Household Wreck is De Quincey's only avowed fiction which deals with the modern world - his other fictions are all eminently 'Gothic'. Of the early writers of terror-romanticism, Mrs. Radcliffe most nearly resembles De Quincey in means of evoking terror. Walpole had dealt with supernatural events without argument or explanation, but Mrs. Radcliffe dealt with them in such a manner that they only appear to be supernatural and are capable of being satisfactorily explained. We are always aware of the penetrating intellect wishing to attain the truth. This is a characteristic of all De Quincey's writing.

This lurking fondness of De Quincey's for the mysterious reveals itself in the imagery cloaking his figures. They move in a world of shadows, storms, ³ gloom, veils, vapours and shades.

The weather images ^{are} set an atmosphere of pervading blackness and melancholy, against which De Quincey places a character for whom the reader's sympathy is engaged. This is the innocent soul in the midst of hostile forces which would crush him. Such a one is William in The Fatal Marksman. Indistinct outlines of misty forms came and went around his magic circle: "their vapoury lineaments fluctuated and obeyed the motions of the wind; one only stood unchanged, and, like a shadow, near to the circle, and settled the sad light of its eyes steadfastly upon William." ¹

1. The Fatal Marksman. p. 306.

De Quincey views himself in The Confessions as one preyed on by hostile forces. He sees storm-clouds sweeping across that otherwise serene and radiant dawn which should have heralded his approach into life.¹ The storms which he outlived in London seemed to him to have been the pledge of a long fair weather.² When he drops his daily intake of opium by seven-eighths, "instantaneously, and as if by magic, the cloud of profoundest melancholy which rested upon my brain," he says, "like some black vapours that I have seen roll away from the summit of a mountain, drew off in one week."³ But this is relatively short lived, for he could not sustain from taking the drug: "opium I pursued under a harsh necessity, as an unknown, shadowy power, leading I knew not whither, and a power that might suddenly change countenance upon this unknown road."⁴ "The shadows of eclipse were too dark and lurid"⁵ not to rouse and alarm him into a spasmodic effort for reconquering the ground he had lost, but his nervous irritations became so insufferable that he fled back to the opium. The dark forces in his soul are thus mirrored in the dark forces he sees in surrounding nature.

The Household Wreck has not the characteristic Gothic features to lend it an horrific air, but nevertheless this tale is quite terrifying. Animal, and particularly storm, imagery, amplifies the effect of power and destruction in the events. The opening note sets the tone; "The mighty Juggernaut of social life, moving onwards with its everlasting thunders, pauses not a moment to spare, to pity, to look aside, but rushes forward for ever, impassive as

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| 1. <u>The Confessions.</u> | p. 64. |
| 2. ibid. | p. 174. |
| 3. ibid. | p. 201. |
| 4. ibid. | p. 214. |
| 5. ibid. | p. 215. |

the marble in the quarry, caring not for whom it destroys, for the how many, or for the results direct and indirect, whether many or few." ¹ The terrific tragedies it causes, "like monsoons or tornadoes, accomplish the work of years in an hour." ² The hero draws a picture of his happiness; he sees himself as living "in the light and presence, or, if I should not be suspected of seeking rhetorical expressions, I would say, in one eternal solstice of unclouded hope." ³ His wife Agnes is beautiful, but with "a shade of pensiveness" ⁴ about her. When an Hungarian prophetess looks at the hand of their child Francis, and then at the hand of Agnes, there follow "mysterious suppressions and insinuations," ⁵ which leave all "shadowy and indistinct." ⁵ The sufferings fall upon them. "His mind is darkened, and likely to be darkened, as to its power of discernment, by the hurricane of affliction now too probably at hand." ⁶ Stormy moods assail him; he cannot seek even a momentary shelter from his tempestuous affliction; when Hannah, one of his servants, brings him tea after his first night of separation from his wife, it seemed "to relax and thaw the stiff, frozen state of cheerless, rayless despair" ⁷ in which he had passed the night; "a cloud of evil" ⁸ hovers over him. A case of a young and beautiful married woman arose "like a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand," then spread and threatened to burst in tempest upon the public mind, ⁹ when suddenly it disappeared. In one of Agnes' dreams, transplanted to his own sleep, she saw a great trial being held with false witnesses and "judges of darkness." ¹⁰ Then the

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| 1. <u>The Household Wreck.</u> | pp.159-160. | 6. <u>The Household Wreck.</u> | p.180. |
| 2. ibid. | p. 160. | 7. ibid. | p.192. |
| 3. ibid. | p. 162. | 8. ibid. | p.201. |
| 4. ibid. | p. 165. | 9. ibid. | p.206. |
| 5. ibid. | p. 171. | 10. ibid. | p.229. |

trumpet of a mighty archangel would sound, "and then would roll away thick clouds and vapours," ¹ for here was "a court composed of heavenly witnesses - here was a righteous tribunal." ¹

The natural world assailed by storms is of course the common backdrop of the Gothic novels. De Quincey's novel Klosterheim, one of the most generally acceptable of all Gothic novels, shares this characteristic, but does not exploit it to the ridiculous length to which many of the writers do. Coleridge, in fact, said that "In purity of style and idiom, in which the scholar is ever implied, and the scholarly never obtrudes itself, it reaches an excellence to which Sir Walter Scott ... appears never to have aspired..." ² Whatever hesitations we may have about this latter assertion, the former is beyond doubt.

The ancient town of Klosterheim is set in a howling wilderness, the proving-ground of bands of soldiers, for The Thirty Years' War is raging in Germany. In this tempestuous setting move tempestuous events, and the imagery heightens the sense of their tumult. To every city in Germany strangers are driven in "for momentary shelter from the storm of war as it spread over one district after another." ³ A body of cavalry moves with "a heavy thundering trot." ³ This image is to recur in the novel - the great palace at Klosterheim is to resound with "the deep thunders of the battle-drums;" ⁴ when The Masque reveals his face to the Landgrave, the latter falls "as if shot by a thunderbolt;" ⁵ Paulina's carriage leaves Klosterheim "at a thundering pace." ⁶ The great storm of war "had whistled and raved" ⁷ round the city, "but hitherto none had penetrated the

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| 1. <u>The Household Wreck.</u> | p. 229 | 4. <u>Klosterheim.</u> | p. 92. |
| 2. <u>Unpublished Letters</u> , I | | 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 106. |
| Coleridge. | p. 419. | 6. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 125. |
| 3. <u>Klosterheim.</u> | p. 15. | 7. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 48. |

silvan sanctuary which on every side invested this privileged city. The ground seemed charmed by some secret spells, and concentrated^{sec} from intrusion. For the great tempest had often swept directly upon them, and yet still had wheeled off, summoned away by some momentary call, to some remoter attraction. But now at length all things portended that, if the war should revive in strength after this brief suspension, it would fall with accumulated weight upon this yet unravaged district." ¹ The townspeople watch the progress of a large body of their friends towards Klosterheim. Mounted troops seem to be threatening the travelling-party, but they sweep by. "The first cloud, then, ... was passed off as suddenly as it had gathered." ² Conspirators at the mansion of Count St. Aldenheim have "much stormy discussion" ³ on their ends. A "cloud of suspicion" ⁴ is later drawn on the Count. In the silence and vastness of his castle, the Landgrave sees a dim figure advancing towards him - "the motion of a shadow could not be more noiseless." ⁵ As he later follows The Masque, "every image floated in a cloudy obscurity." ⁶ Feelings, "enveloped in shades," ⁷ assail the people at the festival. A "storm of music" ⁸ soon sweeps through the assembly. When the Masque appears and speaks to the Landgrave, he shakes him "to and fro in a tempestuous strife of passions." ⁹ The tempestuous troubles of Germany ... become so comprehensive in their desolating sweep" ¹⁰ as to include even Paulina.

The power of the storm images comes from their cumulative

1. <u>Klosterheim.</u>	p. 48.	6. <u>Klosterheim.</u>	p. 84.
2. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 53.	7. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 94.
3. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 65.	8. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 97.
4. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 66.	9. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 105.
5. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 82.	10. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 123.

effect. Raging passions and events are accompanied by raging imagery.

The sense of powerful and destructive forces at work, and of a mysterious providence watching over all, is even greater in Revolt of the Tartars. Storm imagery is used in conjunction with animal imagery and imagery of imprisonment to produce an effect of cataclysmic powers unleashed and scattered over half a continent, with the scythe of death reaping a grim toll. The Kalmuck people move blindly onwards, following their leaders who have determined to reach "the shadow of the great Chinese wall."¹ In the gloomy vengeance of Russia, De Quincey is reminded "of Miltonic images - such, for instance, as that of the solitary hand pursuing through desert spaces and through ancient chaos a rebellious host, and overtaking with volleying thunders those who believed themselves already within the security of darkness and of distance."² Tempests, storms, thunderings, and flashes of lightning echo through the imagery and through the narration, with a concentration as the pace mounts and rushes into the final frenzy of life and death.

In the narration of the wild flight of the mail-coach there are similar images of the speed and power of the elemental forces of nature. "What could be done," De Quincey thinks on the mail-coach, "to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses?"³ As the coach rushes past the gig, "Oh, raving of hurricanes that must have sounded in their young ears at the moment of our transit! Even in that moment the thunder of collision spoke aloud."⁴

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| 1. <u>Revolt of the Tartars.</u> | p. 376. |
| 2. ibid. | p. 368. |
| 3. <u>The English Mail-Coach.</u> | p. 313. |
| 4. ibid. | p. 317. |

But then, "the moments were numbered; the strife was finished; the vision was closed." ¹ But the vision blossoms into a heavenly revelation, an example of the spirit-world controlling events on earth. All is clothed in an aura of mystery, intensified by imagery of shadows and clouds. De Quincey thinks on his English three-decker: "Did ruin to our friends couch within our own dreadful shadow? Was our shadow the shadow of death?" ² The mighty cathedral through which the mail-coach runs is dark and shadowy. Towers and turrets run back "with mighty shadows into answering recesses." ³ The coach flies round terraces "faster than ever light unwove the images of darkness." ³ A female child rides in a frail carriage rolling slowly on towards them. Mists go before her. A stony trumpet sounds notes that speak of death to the girl. ³ But immediately all motion is stilled, and deep shadows fall between the carriages. Then the trumpet sounds a third time, and the cathedral choir "burst forth in sunny grandeur, as from the muffling of storms and darkness; again the thunderings" ⁴ of the horses carry "temptation into the graves." ⁴ A cry bursts from the lips of those travelling on the coach, as the clouds, drawing off from the aisle, show it empty before them. Where has the infant gone? he wonders. Far off, in a vast recess, "rose three mighty windows to the clouds; and on a level with their summits, at height insuperable to man, rose an altar of purest alabaster. On its eastern face was trembling a crimson glory. A glory was it from the reddening dawn that now streamed through the windows?" ⁴ As the vision mounts to a crescendo of glory, all the

1.	<u>The English Mail-Coach.</u>	p. 318.
2.	ibid.	p. 319.
3.	ibid.	p. 324.
4.	ibid.	p. 325.

hosts of jubilation overtake De Quincey and his companions, and as brothers they move together to the dawn that advances, "rendering thanks ^{to} ~~of~~ God in the highest - that, having hid His face through one generation behind thick clouds of war, once again was ascending ... in the visions of Peace." ¹ In her deliverance is emblazoned the endless resurrections of His love.

Light is used here as a symbol of spiritual illumination, and darkness as a symbol of its absence. The sun and the stars are prominent in De Quincey's imagery because of their associations with heaven, their nature as permanent sources of light.

The sun image, in particular, is one rich in meaning for De Quincey. Its dawning can herald peace and prosperity, as for the Kalmucks settled in fertile land and free from oppression in Revolt of the Tartars; ² or it can represent the first glimmerings of glory and might, as in Agrippa's viewing the child and heir of the lamented Germanicus as "the rising sun;" ³ or its blaze can be that of the intellect in the mind of the opium-eater, high over all, with the moral affections in a state of cloudless serenity. ⁴ In his dreams of 1817, De Quincey recalls that "a theatre seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain, which presented mighty spectacles of more than earthly splendour." ⁵ The progress of the sun from first light to its setting parallels the growing of the spirit of God in the heart of the girl in The Daughter of Lebanon. The sun is a symbol of the spirit of God. On the thirtieth morning the sun rose up in all its pomp, but was suddenly darkened by driving

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| 1. <u>The English Mail-Coach.</u> | p. 326. |
| 2. <u>Revolt of the Tartars.</u> | p. 420. |
| 3. <u>Modern Superstition.</u> | p. 430. |
| 4. <u>The Confessions.</u> | p. 182. |
| 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p.233. |

storms. "Not until noon was the heavenly orb again revealed; then the glorious light was again unmasked, and again the Syrian valleys rejoiced. This was the hour already appointed for the baptism of the new Christian daughter. Heaven and earth shed gratulation on the happy festival." ¹ As evening drew nearer, and there was but a brief time till the sun would set, the evangelist rose to his feet and said, "'O daughter! this is the thirtieth day, and the sun is drawing near to his rest; brief, therefore, is the time within which I must fulfill the word that God spoke to thee by me.'" ² He drove off the clouds of delirium playing around her brain, and the gloomy vapours surrounding Lebanon, "and the sun lighted up all the paths that ran between the everlasting cedars and her father's palace." ² Her eyes searched the sky for memorials of her beloved sister, but she saw nothing. Then God dispensed with the symbols of His presence, and the sky itself was parted, opening the infinite revelations to the eyes of the Daughter of Lebanon. She is received into heaven, and "the solar orb dropped behind Lebanon." ³

The eclipse of the sun, or the moon, signifies the supersession of glory by adversity for De Quincey. Thus the great frontier provinces of France sympathise with the Motherland "during great eclipses." ⁴ Temporary eclipse for France is again mentioned in Modern Superstition. ⁵ Even if time had carried off for ever the youthful graces of Agnes in Klosterheim, it "neither had nor seemed likely to destroy the impression of majestic beauty under eclipse

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| 1. <u>The Daughter of Lebanon.</u> | p. 252 |
| 2. ibid. | p. 253 |
| 3. ibid. | p. 254 |
| 4. <u>Joan of Arc.</u> | p. 391. |
| 5. <u>Modern Superstition.</u> | p. 416 |

and wane." ¹

The moon has very little place in De Quincey's writing. When he speaks of spiritual darkness, it is usually spiritual darkness unrelieved by any ray of hope. When light does come it is not the pale glow cast off by the moon but a glorious ray of sunlight breaking through the clouds. The moon does not have the spiritual connotations for De Quincey that the sun has. The Emperor of China in The English Mail-Coach, takes the box-seat on the coach partly because it is nearest the moon. ² The association is a pagan one. The moon has the Gothic value for De Quincey of heightening the effect of eeriness. He speaks in this same essay of a man who had become nervous from some gipsy prediction in his childhood, allocating to a particular moon now approaching some unknown danger. ³ The light of the moon flickers through the ancient streets of Klosterheim in De Quincey's novel, and hides deeper and deeper in the clouds whilst William makes his bullets in The Fatal Marksman. ⁴

De Quincey sees the stars as symbols of the eternal love of God for man. "The stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day," he says, "whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil." ⁵ For man to attain on earth the world of the spirit he must do, in a measure, what Emilius does in The Love-Charms - "Instead of walking about with his fellow creatures in broad daylight and enjoying himself, he gets down to the bottom of the well of his thoughts, for the sake of now and then

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| 1. <u>Klosterheim.</u> | p. 111 |
| 2. <u>The English Mail-Coach.</u> | p. 276 |
| 3. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 278 |
| 4. <u>The Fatal Marksman.</u> | p. 305 |
| 5. <u>The Confessions.</u> | pp. 235-236 |

having a glimpse of a star." ¹ This is what De Quincey does in his moods of depression, but, when elated under the spell of opium, his thoughts dwell constantly in the world of the stars.

Fire is used by De Quincey as an image of violent forces, particularly those of God. To The Avenger, for instance, he pre-^{fixes}~~pares~~ a note: "why callest thou me murderer, and not rather the wrath of God burning after the steps of the oppressor, and cleansing the earth when it is wet with blood?" ² Many of the light images tower up, like the flames which burn Joan of Arc, to the heavens. A striking example of this is in the words of the ^Sorrowful husband and father in The Household Wreck: "I have long since submitted myself, resigned myself, nay, even reconciled myself perhaps, to the great wreck of my life, in so far as it was the will of God, and according to the weakness of my imperfect nature. But my wrath still rises, like a failing flame, against all the earthly instruments of this ruin." ³ Just as those who neglect the spiritual side of their natures are assigned to the flames of Hell in the after world, so those who act against the will of God are assigned in the minds of many of their fellow men to a place of burning. Thus, if distant worlds, he says, are able to see through telescopes what we do on earth, they must suffer a sort of martyrdom themselves at watching the execution of such noble women as Marie Antoinette and Charlotte Corday, "because they could not testify their wrath, could not bear witness to the strength of love and to the fury of hatred that burned within them at such scenes." ⁴

1. The Love-Charm.

p. 446

2. The Avenger.

p. 234.

3. The Household Wreck.

p. 164

4. Joan of Arc.

pp. 407-408

Light is seen in another aspect as a symbol of the vital creative forces of man's mind sweeping aside the darkness of mental stagnation. Thus at times there came back to Agnes in The Household Wreck "some lingering sense of outraged dignity, some fitful gleams of old sympathies, . . .," ¹ and this "prevailed over the deadening stupor of her grief. Then she shone for a moment into a starry light, sweet and useful to remember." ¹ There are blessings De Quincey says in this essay, which, once lost, are incapable of restoration, and because they are "indispensable lights to the darkness of our paths and to the infirmity of our steps, which, once extinguished, never more on this side the gates of paradise can any man hope to see reilluminated for himself." ² An elaborately cultivated intellect he sees as amongst the foremost of these blessings.

The forces of darkness preyed on De Quincey's mind. He sees on his last night at Manchester Grammar School, in the prayer of Mr. Lawson "'Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord!'", "the darkness and the great shadow of night made symbolically significant: these great powers, Night and Darkness, that belong to aboriginal Chaos, were made representative of the perils that continually menace poor afflicted human nature." ³ This recognition of the enormous strife in human life, and its association with darkness, is a recurrent theme of the prose. It is particularly powerful in the narration of the deeds of Williams in London. Williams is the personification of these forces of black peril. His very eyes "seemed frozen and glazed, as if their light were all converged

1. The Household Wreck. p. 205
 2. ibid. p. 162
 3. The Confessions. p. 86

upon some victim lurking in the far background." ¹ He prowls through the blackness of the London streets, extinguishing many a "lamp of life." ² When the servant-girl Mary left the Marr house late at night, she noticed the shadowy figure of Williams by the light of the lamps. ³ Marr himself, had he been ruined in a commercial sense, would have had "energy enough to jump up again, like a pyramid of fire, and soar high above ruin many times repeated." ⁴ But in the hands of Williams, "one born of hell," ⁵ his light flickers and dies.

One of De Quincey's most intensely-felt images of darkness is the city. At the age of seventeen he had arrived in London, and for months he roamed haggardly around her streets with a prostitute and other pariahs. London struck him down and broke him, so that whenever he seeks an image of immense adversity and suffering the word 'London' supplies it. Never was its shadow lifted, and his spirit was haunted in later years by his recollections of his bitter struggles with poverty and loneliness. "The main phenomenon," he says in The Confessions, "by which opium expressed itself permanently, and the sole phenomenon that was communicable, lay in the dreams (and in the peculiar dream-scenery) which followed the opium excesses. But naturally these dreams, and this dream-scenery, drew their outlines and materials - their great lights and shadows - from those profound revelations which had been ploughed so deeply into the heart, from those 'encaustic' records which in the mightly furnaces of London life had been burnt into the undying memory by the fierce action of misery." ⁶ In London he sees Hell on earth.

1. On Murder. p. 77
 2. ibid. p. 112
 3. ibid. p. 83

4. On Murder. p. 81
 5. ibid. p. 68
 6. The Confessions. p. 211

However, darkness is more for De Quincey than a symbol of the perils in human life. It also symbolizes the absence of the spiritual in man or on earth. The interplay of those alive and dead to spiritual revelations is the basis of the power of the trial and burning scenes in Jean of Arc. "How I honour thy flashing intellect," he says of Joan, "quick as God's lightning, and true as God's lightning to its mark, that ran before France and laggard Europe by many a century, confounding the malice of the ensnarer, and making dumb the oracles of falsehood!"¹ The tortured and the torturer he sees as sometimes both kindling into dreams together. "When the mortal minds were gathering fast upon you two, bishop and shepherd girl - when the pavilions of life were closing up their shadowy curtains about you - let us try, through the gigantic glooms, to decipher the flying features of your separate visions."² As she enters her last dream, Joan thinks of springtime, taken from her by the darkness of dungeons. Her mission has been fulfilled - "The storm was weathered; the skirts even of that mighty storm were drawing off."² But the light of the Bishop of Beauvais, an appointed deputy of God on earth, has gone astray. The fluctuating mirror of his mind rises "(like the mocking mirrors of 'mirage' in Arabian deserts) from the fens of death."² His dreams are guilt ridden, but through the pleading of Joan, he might yet reach God.

Imagery of light and darkness is most effective when most concentrated, as in The Daughter of Lebanon, and in the closing

1. Jean of Arc p. 404
 2. ibid. p. 414

scenes of Joan of Arc and The English Mail-Coach. In his contemplation of an innocent girl beset by the strife of life, and wishing to rise above it, imagery of light flashing from the heavens and piercing the darkness around her floods his mind.

A sense of mystery is associated with his visions, and one form of expression it takes in his essays is that of veils, cloaks, and curtains. Klosterheim has these elements in abundance, as would be expected in a Gothic novel. The townspeople of Klosterheim endeavoured "to penetrate the veil which now concealed the fortunes of their travelling friends;" ¹ the visitors at the Landgrave's festival tried "to pierce the veil of silence and of distance;" ² many local acts had been covered "with a veil of political pretexts." ³ Draperies of mist and smoke, ⁴ a dense mist which wraps the whole forest in darkness, ⁵ the mysterious Masque leaning against a marble column "as if wrapped up in reverie." ⁶ These are images of real objects covered by mantles, and hence cloaked in an aura of mystery.

However, it is not only the Gothic essays which have many images of covering - they are a feature of his 'impassioned prose'. The figures and objects of his dreams are generally seen not directly in themselves, but behind misty screens or wrappings. Thus he dreams of hearing the heart-shaking sound of 'Consul Romanus': "and immediately came 'sweeping by' in gorgeous

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1. Klosterheim p. 55
 2. ibid. p.105
 3. ibid. p.110
 4. ibid. pp.32, 106
 5. ibid. p. 55
 6. ibid. p.101

paludaments, Paullus or Marius, girt around by a company of centurions." ¹ "A vast curtain of vapour" ² stretches across his mind when he dreams in a Shrewsbury hotel. "The tyranny of the human face," as he calls it, "began to unfold itself" ³ in his later dreams. Forgotten scenes of childhood were placed before him "in dreams like intuitions, and clothed in all their evanescent circumstances and accompanying feelings." ⁴ A child on the verge of death, he records, "'saw in a moment her whole life, clothed in its forgotten incidents, arrayed before her as in a mirror, not successively, but simultaneously...'" ⁴ He sees "a thousand accidents may and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind. Accidents of the same sort will also ~~send~~ ^rend away the veil." ⁵ The haze in which he sees men in his dreams follows from the haze in which he sees them in real life. "So thick a curtain of 'manners'," he says in The Confessions "is drawn over the features and expression of men's natures, that, to the ordinary observer, the two extremities, and the infinite field of varieties which lie between them, are all confounded under one neutral disguise." ⁶

Man he sees as a being clothed in his thoughts, manners, and person by supernatural powers. The 'Graces', he says in Suspiria de Profundis, "dress man's life with beauty; the 'Parcoe' weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom always with colours sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic

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| 1. | <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 237 |
| 2. | ibid. | p. 144 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 239 |
| 4. | ibid. | p. 234 |
| 5. | ibid. | p. 235 |
| 6. | ibid. | p. 167 |

crimson and black." ¹ From this view he takes of man and life flow the numerous clothing and veiling images. Thus the Dominican monk at Joan's side, "wrapped up in his sublime office," ² does not see the danger of the flames. The heavenly functions this man is performing also wrap him off from the multitudes at the burning. The hosts of jubilation, in the cathedral of The English Mail-Coach, had also wrapped De Quincey and his companions around, "as with a garment," ³ with heavenly thunders. The light of God, on the thirtieth morning, in The Daughter of Lebanon, is darkened by driving storms. Bât at noon, "the glorious light was again unmasked." ⁴ When the evangelist raises his staff for the third time, he takes away 'themask' which God has placed between himself and man. ⁵ The events which overtake the Kalmucks in Revolt of the Tartars, De Quincey sees as a great unrolling. The sufferings they had suffered in the first month of their flight were but a foretaste of those which afterwards succeeded. "For now began to unroll the most awful series of calamities, and the most extensive, which is anywhere recorded to have visited the sons and daughters of men." ⁶ He will trace historically the successive stages of the general misery, "exactly as it unfolded itself under the double agency of weakness still increasing from within and hostile pressure from without." ⁷ The progress of the great armies across the vast steppes he sees as through a dusty vapour. This shadowiness of events is apparent to the Emperor of China. As he watches from the frontiers of his kingdom,

1. Suspiria de Profundis p. 364

2. Joan of Arc p. 413

3. The English Mail-Coach p. 326

4. The Daughter of Lebanon p. 252

5. The Daughter of Lebanon p. 253

6. Revolt of the Tartars p. 390

7. ibid. p. 392

he sees "huge aerial draperies, hanging in mighty volumes from the sky to the earth; and at particular points, where the eddies of the breeze acted upon the pendulous skirts of these aerial curtains, rents were perceived,"¹ through which he could dimly see the massing of horses and men. But the growing tumult, "the clamours, shrieks, and groans, ascending from infuriated myriads, reported, in a language not to be misunderstood, what was going on behind the cloudy screen."¹ Then "the curtain which veils the great catastrophe"² is raised, and the tremendous scene of slaughter at ^Lake Tengis towers before the reader.

Real life figures are frequently forged in the furnace of De Quincey's mind into something other than themselves, into phantom forms that glide through his essays. Phantoms, ghosts, and spectres are characteristic figures of the imagery of his visions. As Williams is feeling the beatings of the boy's heart in the essay On Murder, the murdered girl, in her dying delirium, arises "solemnly, and in ghostly silence."³ The promised rest for the Kalmucks in Revolt of the Tartars proved "a mere phantom of the wilderness - a visionary rainbow, which fled before their hope—sick eyes, across these interminable solitudes, for seven months of hardship and calamity, without a pause."⁴ The armies are seen by the Emperor of China as "a mighty apparition in the desert."⁵ Alone in the snow of the Andes, the Spanish Military nun sees "no phantom memorial of life for the eye or for the ear nor wing of bird, nor echo, nor green leaf, nor creeping thing

1. <u>Revolt of the Tartars</u>	p. 412	4. <u>Revolt of the Tartars</u>	p. 392
2. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 393	5. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 413
3. <u>On Murder</u>	p. 121		

that moved or stirred, upon the soundless waste."¹ "A thousand times, amongst the phantoms of sleep," De Quincey says in The English Mail-Coach, he has seen the girl "entering the gates of the golden dawn."²

De Quincey's mind in Suspiria de Profundis moves in a dusky, phantom-haunted world, where "the brain is haunted as if by some jealousy of ghostly beings."³ "The image, the memorial, the record," he says, "which for me is derived from a palimpsest as to one great fact in our human being," raises such laughter as "mimicries of earth-born flowers that for the eye raise phantoms of gaiety, as oftentimes for the ear they raise the echoes of fugitive laughter mixing with the ravings and choir-voices of an angry sea."⁴ They are "phantoms of gaiety" because, they are flitting and short-lived. The three 'Ladies of Sorrow' he sees are "mighty phantoms" of "one mysterious household;"⁵ often on earth he had heard their mysteries deciphered. These three spirits fulfill a mission for God - to plague man's heart with the revelation of sad, grand, and fearful truths until the capacities of his spirit are unfolded. The eldest of the three is named 'Our Lady of Tears'. She raves night and day, calling for vanished faces. This sister carries keys by which she is able to glide, a ghostly intruder, into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, and sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from the Nile to the Mississippi. The rivers De Quincey

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| 1. <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u> | p. 202 |
| 2. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 326 |
| 3. <u>Suspiria de Profundis</u> | p. 324 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 346 |
| 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 364 |

sets as frontiers symbolise the ever-flowing sorrows of the human race, for which this spirit mourns. The second sister is called 'Our Lady of Signs'. Her eyes are filled with perishing dreams. She dwells in solitary places. All who are outcasts, all who are captives, all who are betrayed, walk with Our Lady of Sighs. The third and youngest sister is The Lady of Darkness. Her power is supreme within her realm, but that realm is small, for she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions. When this spirit enters a man, it overpowers him - there is no respite. ¹

These three spirits are states of mind personified by De Quincey. Darkness, tears, and signs, have all been his, and the intensity with which he felt them produced the three phantom personifications.

Joan of Arc's visions De Quincey sets in a context of supernaturalism. There is a series "of sweeping glooms!" ² The battle of Agincourt "had reopened the wounds of France," ³ and "the graves that had closed sixty years ago seemed to fly open in sympathy with a sorrow that echoed their own." ³ The wild story of the gloomy man coming out of the forest, checking the king for a moment to say, 'Oh, King, thou art betrayed', and then vanishing, "fell in with the universal prostration of mind that laid France on her knees, as before the slow unweaving of some ancient prophetic doom." ³ Tragic chords for France were struck from a mysterious harp. ³ The Church was being undermined

1. Suspiria de Profundis p. 366

2. Joan of Arc p. 393

3. ibid. p. 392

by revolutions, and "the colossal figure of feudalism was seen standing, as it were on tiptoe, at Crecy, for flight from earth."¹

De Quincey's mind sees the mysterious in the forests surrounding Domremy. These forests "were the glories of the land: for in them abode mysterious powers and ancient secrets that ⁺powered into tragic strength."² The abbeys were few and scattered enough as not to disturb the deep solitude of the region, yet "many enough to spread a network or awning of Christian sanctity over what else might have seemed a heathen wilderness."² In these vast forests, also, "were to be found (if anywhere to be found) those mysterious fawns that tempted solitary hunters into visionary and perilous pursuits",² and "here was seen (if anywhere seen) that ancient stag who was already nine hundred years old, but possibly a hundred or two more, when met by Charlemagne."² Joan's angelic visions and her hearing of angelic voices are thus supernatural occurrences set in the midst of the supernatural. The events themselves are clearly delineated, but set in a haze of the spiritual.

The Confessions, as the record of De Quincey's spiritual passage through life, has many images of mystery. London itself he sees as a city of "mighty labyrinths."³ In the midst of his struggles in London, he had longed for the lands of the north: "'If I had the wings of a dove, 'that' may I would fly for rest.'"³ But, when he does move to Grasmere, the perplexities of his steps in London come back and haunt his sleep. "There it was", in that

1. Joan of Arc p. 392

2. ibid. p. 394

3. The Confessions p. 173

northern region, he writes, "that for years I was persecuted by visions as ugly, and by phantoms as ghastly, as ever haunted the couch of Orestes." ¹ His wife Margaret he sees as his Electra, the woman who soothed him even when her own peaceful slumbers had by long sympathy become infected with the spectacle of his "dread contest with phantoms and shadowy enemies." ² In his later visions particularly, he looks at life with the eyes of a child - everything is very black, or very bright; a haze of mystery is over all. "I know not", says De Quincey, "whether my reader is aware that many children have a power of painting, as it were, upon the darkness all sorts of phantoms; in some that power is simply a mechanic affection of the eye; others have a voluntary or semi-voluntary power to dismiss or summon such phantoms; or, as a child once said to me, when I questioned him on this matter, 'I can tell them to go, and they go; but sometimes they come when I don't tell them to come!..in the middle of 1817 this faculty became increasingly distressing to me.'" ³ He notices that whatever he consciously thought in his waking state was very apt to transfer itself to his dreams, and at length he feared to exercise this faculty, "for", he writes, "as Midas turned all things to gold that yet baffled his hopes and defrauded his human desires, so whatsoever things capable of being usually represented I did but think of in the darkness, immediately shaped themselves into phantoms for the eye; and, by a process apparently no less inevitable, when thus once traced in paint and visionary colours, like writings in sympathetic ink, they were drawn out

1. The Confessions p. 175

2. ibid. p. 176

3. ibid. pp. 232, 233.

by the fierce chemistry of my dreams, into insufferable splendour that fretted my heart".¹

The dream itself De Quincey uses as an image, especially in the 'Gothic' essays. Bertram the forester in The Fatal Marksman tells of one Smith who did devils' work, and, just before he died, woke as "out of a dream".² Katharine, before William's disastrous trial, "went about her household labours as if dreaming".³ Dark forces are often associated with the dream. In The Avenger, the general feeling in the German town at the time of the murders is "like that which sometimes takes possession of the mind in dreams - when one feels one's-self sleeping alone, utterly divided from all call or hearing of friends, doors open that should be shut, or unlocked that should be triply secured, the very walls gone, barriers swallowed up by unknown abysses, nothing around one but frail curtains, and a world of illimitable night, whisperings at a distance, correspondence going on between darkness and darkness, like one deep calling to another, and the dreamer's own heart the centre from which the whole network of this unimaginable chaos radiates, by means of which the blank 'privations' of silence and darkness become powers the most 'positive' and awful". This passage of 'impassioned prose' illustrates the effect solitariness, silence, and darkness have on De Quincey. They acquire a gloomy grandeur in his dreams, and become awful powers.

The form of the dream as well as its content is used by De Quincey with effect as an image. "What followed for the next

1. The Confessions p. 233
 2. The Fatal Marksman p. 299
 3. ibid. p. 312

few minutes", he says in The Household Wreck, "hurried onwards, incident crowding upon incident, like the motions of a dream."¹ In The Avenger he writes, "all opposition fled like a dream",² and Modern Superstition has the reference "Seven years of sunshine had now slipped away as silently as a dream."³

The mystery of existence fascinated De Quincey. He sought to plumb the depths of his soul and rise above the strife of life. Belief in a God and heavenly hosts with absolute powers over mankind was a sustaining emotion for him. His own experience of life had impressed him with the frailty of man, and the mercy of God. Life he sees as a pilgrimage to death, and thence to the judgment-seat of God. "One heaven", he says in Mr. Schnackenberg, is over all good creatures that are pilgrims on this earth."⁴ He closes Early Memorials of Grasmere with the note that there should be constructed in the mountains many "a cross or crucifix, which, besides its own beauty, would suggest to the mind a pensive allegoric memorial of that spiritual asylum offered by the same emblem to the poor erring roamer in our human pilgrimage, whose steps are beset with other snares, and whose heart is bewildered by another darkness and another storm, - by the darkness of guilt, or by the storm of affliction".⁵

Treachery to oneself is an idea which continually haunts De Quincey. He projects the possibility of it into the mind of the young man in The English Mail-Coach. It had thus moved into his dreams. Perhaps not one of us, he says, escapes the dream of falsehood to oneself, "perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for every one of us, through every

1. The Household Wreck p. 224

2. The Avenger p. 268

3. Modern Superstition p. 432

4. Mr. Schnackenberg p. 320

5. Early Memorials of Grasmere p. 157

generation, the original temptation in Eden...once again, as in aboriginal Paradise, the man falls by his own choice; again, by infinite iteration, the ancient earth groans to Heaven, through her secret caves, over the weakness of her child. 'Nature, from her seat, sighing through all her works', again gives signs of woe that all is lost¹; and again the counter sigh is repeated to the sorrowing heavens for the endless rebellion against God".¹ Truth to onself he considers the important thing in life. He says in The Confessions that it is probably true that "the dread book of account, which the Scriptures speak of, is, in fact, the mind itself of each individual".² De Quincey is highly conscious of his own past - his dreams take him back through his life, and there is a dwelling on incidents of torment.

The religious feeling is especially strong in Joan of Arc, The English Mail-Coach, The Daughter of Lebanon, and certain passages of The Confessions. God towers over these works, and spiritual light flashes through the darkness on earth. The prevailing theme is the mercy, He has for His tormented creatures on earth, and yet there are hints of a tremendous punishment which He will inflict where he sees fit to do so. Hell is very seldom mentioned in these essays, but, presumably, there can't be a heaven without a hell, and our strong sense in these essays of the glory which awaits those received by God into his kingdom is amplified by the certain knowledge we feel of the gloom which awaits those who spurn and are spurned by God.

1. The English Mail-Coach p. 304
2. The Confessions p. 235

In the essay On Murder, De Quincey dwells upon the blackness of one divorced from God, and the dreadful end that awaits him. He views Williams as a demon, "one born of hell",¹ with "his devilish heart brooding over the most hellish of purposes".² This was a "hell-kite that knew not what mercy meant",³ "one demon whose idea had brooded and tyrannised, for twelve days, over the general heart".⁴ Associated with Williams and this imagery of hell is imagery of death. The little narrow passage, along which Williams, the "patron of gravediggers",⁵ passes, is "narrow as a coffin";⁶ the poor servant girl, Mary, is "as still as death"⁶ as she listens outside the locked door; it would be "taking away the very sting of the enjoyment if the poor child (in the Williamson house) should be suffered to drink off the bitter cup of death without fully apprehending the misery of the situation";⁷ if Williams, with his "corpselike face",² had seen him, "the journeyman, standing in motionless horror, would have been detected in one instant, and seasoned for the grave in the second";⁸ Williams is eventually buried at the "conflux of four roads..., with a stake driven through his heart. And over him drives for ever the uproar of unresting London"! ⁹

Imagery of hell is scattered throughout Mr. Schnackenberg. As the good natured, trusting man travelling through life, assailed by the forces of malice and ill-temper, Mr. Schnackenberg has imagery of the heavens applied to him, but moves in a world

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| 1. <u>On Murder</u> | p. 81 | 6. <u>On Murder</u> | p. 88 |
| 2. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 78 | 7. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 110 |
| 3. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 85 | 8. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 102 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 112 | 9. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 124 |
| 5. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 96 | | |

in which the powers of hell are rampant. He tells the people of the town that "one heaven, as Pfeffel observes, is over all good creatures that are pilgrims on this earth - let their travelling coats..."¹ In the prison, Mr. Schnackenberg starts up in rage and shakes the iron bars of the window "with a fervent prayer that instead of bars it had pleased God to put Mr. Mayor within his grasp".² He does escape from the prison, and has the Mayor under his power. "'Saints in heaven! is this the messenger of the last day?'"³ a female voice had screamed as he rang the door-bell. Mr. Schnackenberg's dog Juno continually leads him into misfortune. At one point she had gone off in search of a kitten "as if the devil drove her".⁴ Mr. Schnackenberg's torments come to an end when he recognizes that Juno "is a mere agent of the fiend, and minister of perdition, to him who is so unhappy as to call her his".⁵

The murders in The Avenger are carried out in vengeance, not for monetary gain and out of sheer bloodlust as are those of Williams. De Quincey had prefixed a note to the essay: "'why callest thou me murderer, and not rather the wrath of God burning after the steps of the oppressor, and cleansing the earth when it is wet with blood?'"⁶ The imagery applied to Maximilian Wyndham, 'the avenger', and those dear to him, is imagery of the heavenly. Maximilian has "a sadness that might have become a Jewish prophet, when laden with inspirations of woe".⁷ When the murders are done, "Sleep, daughter of Jerusalem", he says "for at length the oppressor

1. Mr. Schnackenberg p. 320
 2. ibid. p. 342
 3. ibid. p. 343
 4. ibid. p. 353

5. Mr. Schnackenberg p. 361
 6. The Avenger p. 234
 7. ibid. p. 240

sleeps with thee! - and thy poor son has paid, in discharge of his ^vow, the ^forget of his own happiness - of a Paradise opening upon earth - of a heart as innocent as thine, and a face as fair! " ¹ His mother, during her trial before the mob, with "the divinity of injured innocence", ² had "behaved as might have become a daughter of Judas Maccaboeus! ² In the midst of his last 'purge', Margaret Liebenheim's "angel's face and angel's voice" ³ appeared to him. He ends his letter of explanation for his actions with: 'Sleeping daughters of Jerusalem, in the sanctity of your sufferings. And thou, if it be possible, even more beloved daughter of a Christian fold, whose company was too soon denied to him in life, open thy grave to receive 'him' who, in the hour of death, wishes to remember no title which he wore on earth but that of thy chosen and adoring lover, 'Maximilian'. ⁴

With the animal and bird imagery applied to Agnes in The Household Wreck, there is associated heavenly imagery. She is seen as one persecuted by a very devil in Barratt. She is a dove defenceless against the vulture; ⁵ a lamb amongst wolves; ⁵ a fawn whose path is crossed by a tiger. ⁵ She is an "angel, whose most innocent heart fitted thee", De Quincey says of her, "for too early a flight from this impure ^{planet} ~~Danet~~! ⁶ Barratt, "that tiger from hell-gates", ⁷ tore this girl away from her lover. Kind natured, innocent womanhood, destroyed by cruel bloodlust, drew forth De Quincey's most heartfelt sympathies. "Catch one

1. The Avenger p. 278
 2. ibid. p. 279
 3. ibid. p. 283
 4. ibid. p. 285

5. The Household Wreck p. 163
 6. ibid. pp. 163-164
 7. ibid. p. 164

~~draw forth De Quincey's most heartfelt sympathies. "Catch one~~
 glance from her angelic countenance", he says, and you would
 have pronounced her a Pandora or an Eve".¹ Her husband speaks
 of the youthful loveliness of his "angelic wife",² this "meek
 saint!"³ When she is on trial she is "a meek angel of a woman".⁴
 The cry of the people against Barratt grew fiercer and louder, for
 "mighty had been the power over the vast audience of the dignity,
 the affliction, the perfect simplicity, and the Madonna beauty
 of the prisoner".⁵ The husband is tormented by the thought that
 one morning he and her brother "might find a solitary cell, and
 the angel ^{form} ~~from~~ that had illuminated it" ⁶ gone where they could
 not follow. The spirit and the body jostle each other in the
 imagery, but God is seen as the controller of man's destinies.
 The Hungarian prophetess tells Agnes that "sometimes, true it
 is, God sees not as man sees; and he ordains, after his
 unfathomable counsels, to the heavenly-minded a portion in
 heaven, and to the children whom he loves a rest and a haven
 not built with hands".² The suffering husband thinks to himself,
 "think not of hope in this world; but think only how best to walk
 steadily, and not to reel ^{like} ~~with~~ a creature wanting discourse of
 reason, or incapable of religious hopes, under the burden which
 it has pleased God to impose, and which in this life cannot be
 shaken off. The countenance of man is made to look upward and to
 the skies!"⁷

1. The Household Wreck p. 166
 2. ibid. p. 170
 3. ibid. p. 211
 4. ibid. p. 193

5. The Household Wreck p. 206
 6. ibid. p. 216
 7. ibid. pp. 190-191.

God as the wielder of mighty, awe-inspiring destructive powers also impressed De Quincey. Mr. Whelp, the proprietor of the china-works in The King of Hayti, saw it as "an injustice that would cry aloud to heaven for redress"¹ if his works were rejected. The Abbess in Klosterheim charged the blood of Paulina upon the Landgrave's head,² and "bade him expect certain retribution from Heaven for so wanton and useless an effusion of innocent blood".² The tremendous flight of the Tartars appears to De Quincey as "a religious 'Exodus', authorized by an oracle venerated throughout many nations of Asia - an Exodus therefore, in so far resembling the great Scriptural Exodus of the Israelites, under Moses and Joshua."³ In Early Memorials of Grasmere De Quincey sees Easedale, nestled amongst hills, and overshadowed by towering mountain barriers, as "a chamber within a chamber, or rather a closet within a chamber - a chapel within a cathedral - a little private oratory within a chapel".⁴ This is a parallel image to that of the avenue down which the mail-coach hurtles in The English Mail-Coach. Trees, overshadowing the avenue as the mountains overshadow Grasmere, and thrusting like the mountains to the heavens, give to it "the character of a cathedral aisle".⁵ Disaster is to strike in both these settings, and God is to display his almighty powers. After her terrible journey over the Andes, the Spanish military nun lay in the bushes, and "saw the interlacing of boughs overhead forming a dome that seemed like the dome of a cathedral".⁶

1. The King of Hayti p. 392

2. Klosterheim p. 145

3. The English Mail-Coach p. 369

4. Early Memorials of Grasmere p. 128

5. The English Mail-Coach p. 314

6. The Spanish Military Nun p. 204

And beyond this she saw the dome of some heavenly cathedral. St. Sebastion recurred in her consciousness. When Kate arrived in Cadiz, "she saw every ship, street, house, convent, church, crowded, as if on some mighty day of judgment.." ¹ The day of judgment recurs in the imagery in The English Mail-Coach when De Quincey sees the helpless girl may, within seventy seconds, have to stand "before the judgment-seat of God". ²

Characteristic of De Quincey's prose is the association of spiritual and musical imagery. Music, indeed, and sound in general, has something of the spiritual for him in Modern Superstition. He speaks of the exact anniversary hour revolving on Christmas eve "of that angelic song once rolling over the fields and flocks of Palestine". ³ From discussing the "earliest note, in the ascending scale of superstitious faith", he passes "to a more alarming key". ⁴ The feeling of the danger of using direct words in expressing fatal contingencies, he says, "is undoubtedly supported by good taste which strongly impresses upon us all the discordant tone of any impassioned subjects (death, religion, etc.) with the common key of ordinary conversation". ⁵ The impassioned he sees here on a higher musical plane than the ordinary. The sea was a great abyss of terrors for De Quincey. ⁶ Voices seem to him to blend with its raving "which will for ever impress the feeling of beings more than human". ⁶ The wilderness of the barren sands he sees as the other mighty form of perfect solitude. As an example of its own peculiar terrors, he tells of the bells in the wilderness of Zin, between

1. <u>The Spanish Military Nun</u>	p. 233	4. <u>Modern Superstition</u>	p. 411
2. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u>	p. 315	5. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 417
3. <u>Modern Superstition</u>	p. 408	6. <u>ibid.</u>	p. 437

Palestine and the Red Sea, which "are heard daily pealing for matins or for vespers from some phantom convent that no search of Christian or of Bedouin Arab has ever been able to discover. These bells have sounded since the Crusades. Other sounds, - trumpets, the 'Alala' of armies, etc., - are heard in other regions of the desert!"¹ Marco Polo reported desert phantoms, said "at times to fill the air with choral music from all kinds of instruments, from drums, and the clash of arms: so that oftentimes a whole caravan are obliged to close up their open ranks, and to proceed in a compact line of march",² says De Quincey.

A religious feeling is aroused in De Quincey by tumultuous music. Musical imagery is especially salient in The English Mail-Coach and Joan of Arc, both essays of deep religious feeling.

It is evident from The English Mail-Coach that harmony and discord in music symbolize for De Quincey the harmony and discord in life. Immediately prior to the fatal accident, there is a "general state of halcyon repose. The sea, the atmosphere, the light, bore each an orchestral part in this universal lull. Moonlight and the first timid tremblings of the dawn were by this time blending; and the blendings were brought into a still more exquisite state of unity by a slight silvery mist, motionless and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency".³ Religious imagery cascades over the figures in the vision. Then comes the crash. The "Dream-Fugue" follows, a polyphonism with the various elements in the central

1. Modern Superstition p. 437

2. ibid. p. 439

3. The English Mail-Coach p. 311

vision of sudden death harmonised. From the vision rolls an amalgam of images, and "deep rolling chords come up at intervals through all the world of sleep".¹ After his voyages on the sea in his vision, he sleeps in a boat by the shore.² There is harmony. But this is broken into by the pealing of funeral bells. He sees a girl running towards peril, but is too late to save her, and "the funeral bells from the desert seas...sang a requiem over the grave of the buried child, and over her blighted dawn".³ But suddenly the tears and funeral bells are hushed by a roar advancing rapidly along the valleys. "Oh heavens!" he whispers, "'it is 'victory' that is final, victory that swallows up all strife.'" ⁴ From the harmony and discord of life has proceeded a vision of the glory of God and the heavens. He is carried to a distant kingdom over land and sea, and placed amongst others upon a triumphal carriage. Tidings had arrived of a grandeur "that measured itself against centuries", ⁴ and "restless anthems, and 'Te Deums' reverberated from the choirs and orchestras of earth".⁴ The carriage sweeps through the great cathedral till a Dying Trumpeteer rises and sounds his trumpet twice. All is frozen. When it sounds a third time, life pours back into their channels. The choir bursts forth "in sunny grandeur" ⁵ as God manifests His glory. In the mighty cathedral, all the imagery of the fugue merges into a glorious vision of the golden tubes of an organ throwing up, "as from fountains unfathomable",⁶ columns of heart-

1. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> p. 319	4. <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> p. 322
2. ibid. p. 320	5. ibid. p. 325
3. ibid. p. 321	6. ibid. p. 326

shattering music. In this vision De Quincey has illustrated his statement in Suspiria de Profundis that "the rapture of life...does not arise, unless an perfect music arises, music of Mozart or Beethoven, by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtle concords".¹

The discords and concords in his life De Quincey mentions in The Confessions, and, expressed as many of them are in De Quincey's terms of sound and music, their spiritual significance for him is immediately apparent. There is a sadness in his heart on his last night at Manchester Grammar School: "I heard for ever some sullen echo of valediction in every change, casual or periodic that varied the revolving hours from morning to night".² There is obviously some guilt felt at running away, and this is borne out by his later recollection on the event, that he has set a bad example to his brothers: "Here now,...., rang like a solemn knell, reverberating from the sounding-board within my awakened conscience, one of those many self-reproaches so dimly masked, but not circumstantially prefigured, by the secret thought under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral about its dread Whispering Gallery".³

As he left Wales for London, De Quincey felt "the raving, the everlasting uproar of that dreadful metropolis, which at every step was coming nearer, and beckoning (as it seemed) to myself for purposes as dim, for issues as incalculable, as the path of cannon-shots fired at random and in darkness".⁴ The ravings of London never left his dreams.

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| 1. | <u>The English Mail-Coach</u> | p. 350 |
| 2. | <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 83 |
| 3. | ibid. | p. 108 |
| 4. | ibid. | pp. 140-141 |

Opium, too, is given a spiritual significance in The Confessions by the imagery of sound applied to it. How unmeaning a sound was opium, he says, at the time he was introduced to it, but "what solemn chords does it now strike upon my heart! What heart-quaking vibrations of sad and happy remembrances!"¹ He says that on attending the opera-house after taking opium, "a chorus, etc., of elaborate harmony displayed before me, as in a piece of arras-work, the whole of my past life - not as if recalled by an act of memory, but as if present and incarnated in the music; no longer painful to dwell upon, but the detail of its incidents removed, or blended in some hazy abstraction, and its passions exalted, spiritualised, and sublimed".² Thus, through a combination of opium and music, the very passions of his life are spiritualised.

De Quincey's later dreams were tumultuous, and commenced with a music such as he often heard now in sleep, "music of preparation and of awakening suspense. The undulations of fast-gathering tumults were like the opening of the Coronation Anthem; and, like 'that', gave the feeling of a multitudinous movement, of infinite cavalcades filing off, and the tread of innumerable armies".³ Then, "like a chorus, the passion deepened".³ The sound of everlasting farewells to the female figures of his life closed his dreams with reverberations. His dreams now are couched in musical terms.

The spiritual storehouse of man De Quincey sees as the heart. He uses the heart as an image in the popular metaphorical sense of

1. The Confessions p. 178
2. ibid. p. 189

3. The Confessions p. 245

the soul, but the image acquires a power and import in his hands, in its proliferation and imaginative conception. As the soul of the human race, the heart is frequently used in images of a vast scope. In The Household Wreck, for instance, De Quincey sees lamentations ascending "from Earth and the rebellious heart of her children".¹ He sees the natures of men transfigured, in "The Avenger", when "the heart beats in conscious sympathy with an entire city".² The Goddess Levana, he says in Suspiria de Profundis, often communes with the powers that shake man's heart".³ These effects are very striking in those works in which the religious sense is intense. Joan of Arc, for instance, has the following: "the Virgin Mary,...in a course of centuries, had grown steadily upon the popular heart",⁴ "how prodigious must have been the adaptation of the book to the religious heart of the fifteenth century?";⁵ she would not simply disappoint many a beating heart in the glittering crowd that on different motives yearned for her success". "' Now will I search this woman's heart'," says the evangelist in The Daughter of Lebanon - "whether in very truth it inclineth itself to God, and hath strayed only before fiery compulsion".⁶

It is characteristic of De Quincey's prose to invest inanimate objects, and even abstract nouns, with states of mind and emotions.

The natural world is rarely personified by De Quincey, but what effects there are add depth to the other images. Rudolph

1. The Household Wreck p. 157

2. The Avenger p. 236

3. Suspiria de Profundis p. 364

4. Joan of Arc p. 397

5. ibid. p. 410

6. The Daughter of Lebanon p. 250

Schroll, in The ^PRice, "looked down from the battlements upon the gloomy depths of the waters below, which seemed to regard him with looks of sympathy and strong fascination".¹ At that moment Rudolph was contemplating suicide. The strife of the world, and the sympathies for man it arouses in the spirit, is widened by an extension of these feelings from man to nature. The same thing happens in The Love-Charm: "'I am sick of life', Emilius sobs, 'I cannot be glad and happy; I will not. Make haste and receive me, thou dear kind earth, and hide me in thy cool, refreshing arms from the wild beasts that tread over thee and call themselves men'. He continues, 'Oh, God in heaven! how have I deserved that I should rest upon down and wear silk, that the grape should pour forth her most precious blood for me'.² The finger of nature is seen in Klosterheim as announcing a great destiny for the Countess Paulina.³ There is a similar elevation, though in a lighter tone, in the image in The Incognito of "the present race of hailstones" being "scandalously degenerating from their ancestors of the last generation".⁴ The ^Langdale fells, the rugged setting of Early Memorials of Grasmere, "witnessed in darkness"⁵ the deaths of George and Sarah Green. Agnes, and those who help her to escape from her prison in The Household Wreck are "befriended by the fog".⁶

Inanimate objects are more frequently personified. The range of effects is on a range comparable to that of nature

1. The ^PRice p. 384

2. The Love-Charm p. 457

3. Klosterheim p. 111

4. The Incognito p. 427

5. Early Memorials of Grasmere p. 134

6. The Household Wreck p. 227

personified. Many a time, for instance, in The Love-Charm, "did the glasses kiss with a merry health to the youthful couple". London he sees as a city with "a mighty heart".² The city is also personified in Klosterheim as the amalgam of many individuals: the travellers are eventually admitted "into the bosom of a friendly town".³ The "general voice of the city"⁴ later reproaches the Landgrave as the cause of the calamity which has assailed them. The city in The Avenger is personified in the image of convulsion applied to it,⁵ as is the city of Damascus, "asleep in the desert" in The Daughter of Lebanon.⁶ Swallowing is an action frequently used in De Quincey's personifications, as in the reference in the essay On Murder to the joint capital of the McKeanes having "been swallowed up to the last shilling"⁷ by a mercantile crash. In Klosterheim, a striking personification is that of the many passages in the fortress which branched into separate arms.⁸ The two great roads of Domremy are similarly personified. These roads are "as great trunk arteries between two mighty realms, and haunted for ever by wars or rumours of wars,.. one rolling away to the right, past Monsieur D'Arc's old barn, and the other unaccountably preferring to sweep round that odious man's pig-sty to the left".⁹ The personification of "the great four-headed road"¹⁰ is an example of the general personification prefiguring the strange spiritual nature of the country round Domremy, and, in the visions of Joan, Domremy itself is seen as standing upon the

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| 1. <u>The Love-Charm</u> | p. 451 | 6. <u>The Daughter of Lebanon</u> | p. 249 |
| 2. <u>The Confessions</u> | p. 78 | 7. <u>On Murder</u> | p. 119 |
| 3. <u>Klosterheim</u> | p. 56 | 8. <u>Klosterheim</u> | p. 50 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 78 | 9. <u>Joan of Arc</u> | p. 390 |
| 5. <u>The Avenger</u> | p. 234 | 10. <u>ibid.</u> | p. 391 |

frontiers.¹ The battle of Agincourt in Joan's childhood "had reopened the wounds of France",² The universal prostration of mind "laid France on her knees",³ The "colossal figure of feudalism was seen standing, as it were on tiptoe, at Crecy, for flight from earth",³ And then, after all the strife, when Joan is on the scaffold, "the last enemy was racing up the fiery stairs to seize her".⁴

The personification in The Spanish Military Nun is much more vigorous in nature than in any of the other prose works. This amplifies the sense of Kate's great vitality. "The grasp of the Church", she realized, "never relaxed".⁵ Kate thought, as she stood on the summit of the Andes, had she been "running from a wrath that was inexorable?"⁶ Lying exhausted after her crossing of the mountains, she heard sounds of cavalry. "Her dreams, that had opened sullenly to the sound, waited for no answer, but closed again into pompous darkness".⁷ She is half-frozen, not the girl "that tore from the heart of all resistance the banner of her native Spain".⁸

Abstract nouns form the largest branch of De Quincey's personifications. In his acute awareness of the marriage of body and spirit, he endows qualities with human attributes. It usually contributes to a sense of violent action, or oppression. Mr. Schnackenberg, for instance, little thought "under his evening canopy of smoke that Nemesis was threading so closely upon his heels".⁹ Mr. Tempest's scheme in The King of Hayti is "knocked on the head".¹⁰ A secret awe and mysterious terror¹¹ broods over

1. Joan of Arc. p. 390

2. ibid. p. 391

3. ibid. p. 392

4. ibid. p. 413

5. The Spanish Military Nun p. 189

6. ibid.

7. The Spanish Military Nun p. 207

8. ibid. p. 208

9. Mr. Schnackenberg p. 360

10. The King of Hayti p. 395

11. Klosterheim p. 92

p. 197

the evening in Klosterheim. A little later this image is repeated: "feelings of awe and mystery, under more shapes than one, brooded over the whole scene".¹ In the festival hall every cavalier tries "to unmasque the dismal secrets which lurked beneath"² the Masque's disguise. This image of 'lurking' is a frequent one in the prose. Time he sees as carrying off for ever Paulina's youthful graces.³ The interest hanging upon the issue of the events on the night of climax, "swallowed up all other anxieties".⁴ Sometimes the Kalmucks in Revolt of the Tartars, "pressed by grinding famine", took a circuit out of their direct line of flight. "Starvation stared" the Green children, in Early Memorials of Grasmere, "in the face"⁶ if they should be confined for many days to their house. The vast abstraction of the social system is condemned by De Quincey in The Household Wreck: "the more it multiplies and extends its victims, the more it conceals them".⁷ When the stream of life flows quietly, unruffled by a breeze, life, he says, becomes insipid; "the spirit^{of} action drops".⁸ He wonders if "great overthrows and calamities have some mysterious power to send forward a dim misgiving of their advancing footsteps, and really and indeed

'That in today already walks tomorrow.'" ⁹

The narrator of this tale sees the administration of justice liable to thousands of interruptions and mal-practices, "supporting themselves upon old traditionary usages".¹⁰

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| 1. <u>Klosterheim</u> p. 94 | 6. <u>Early Memorials of Grasmere</u> p. 136 |
| 2. <u>ibid.</u> p. 101 | 7. <u>The Household Wreck</u> p. 160 |
| 3. <u>ibid.</u> p. 111 | 8. <u>ibid.</u> p. 167 |
| 4. <u>ibid.</u> p. 139 | 9. <u>ibid.</u> p. 168 |
| 5. <u>Revolt of the Tartars</u> p. 409 | 10. <u>ibid.</u> p. 196 |

There is a lurking body of contagion in the town, which seizes on him, and nearly eight weeks, he says, "had passed over my head whilst I lay unconscious of time and its dreadful freight of events".¹ The "ravages of sorrow"¹ work sorely on Agnes, Barratt is obliged to consummate the ruin he has begun for her, for "the law had travelled too fast for him and too determinately."² Her latter days are now "hurrying to their close".³ The effect to which these images contribute is the same as that of The Avenger, that of "the horror, the perfect frenzy of fear, which seized upon the town".⁴ The crucified body of the jailer will be revealed in this tale when "the autumn and the winter shall again carry the sportsman into every thicket and dingle"⁵ of the forest. Gloom and perils brood continually over the action of these essays. This follows from his vision of life, of a strife-ridden world. "The deep, deep, tragedies of infancy," he says in Suspiria de Profundis, "as when the child's hands were unlinked for ever from his mother's neck, or his lips for ever from his sister's kisses, these remain lurking below all, and these lurk to the last".⁶ The images of brooding perils are especially prominent in The Confessions. He seemed to see perils "in the ambush of midnight solitude, brooding around the beds of sleeping nations; perils from even worse forms of darkness shrouded within the recesses of blind human hearts; perils from temptations weaving unseen snares for our footing; perils from the limitations of our own misleading knowledge".⁷ London rose

1. The Household Wreck p. 200
 2. ibid. p. 215
 3. ibid. p. 216
 4. The Avenger p. 235

5. The Avenger p. 262
 6. Suspiria de Profundis p. 349
 7. The Confessions p. 86

in his dreams - "sole, dark, infinite - brooding over the whole capacities"¹ of his heart. A house he visited in London "wore an unhappy countenance of gloom and unsocial fretfulness".² "So then, Oxford Street", he says, "stony-hearted stepmother, thou that listenest to the sighs of orphans, and drinkest the tears of children, at length I was dismissed from thee!"³ He describes with an image of nature personified a great form of happiness for him in his cottage: "the rain driving vindictively and with malice aforethought against the windows",⁴ and the darkness was such that one is unable to see one's own hand when held up against the sky. For a time he saw "the domineering tyranny"⁵ of opium's exactions steadily declining. However, this was but short lived, and he fell back on a heavy intake of opium.

The image of personification is a characteristic of the mystic writer, as he sees inanimate and animate objects produced from one soul. Mysticism may be defined as the doctrine that man may by self-surrender and spiritual apprehension attain to direct communion with and absorption in God, or that truth may be apprehended directly by the soul without the intervention of the senses and intellect.' It was a vital instinctive belief for Wordsworth, but not for the other Romantics, although their works contain elements of mysticism.

De Quincey laid great stress on the importance of the intellect. He saw it as the one thing which raised man above the beasts, as man's means of communication with God. By

1. The Confessions p. 86 4. The Confessions p. 174
 2. ibid. p. 142 5. ibid. p. 209
 3. ibid. p. 147 6. ibid. p. 217

immersion in the strife of life, and a cultivation of one's intellect, he believed one could rise to an apprehension of the spiritual world. In that he believed this, he is not a mystic. But he is a mystic in that he experiences brief periods of ecstasy, insight, and oblivion.

An outstanding characteristic of the mystic experience is the difficulty of describing it. Often the person to whom it comes resorts to imagery in the hope that it may suggest what is beyond his power to tell. De Quincey's visions, with their shadowy figures and actions, their distortion of time and space, are often difficult to delineate clearly, but he tells us that opium revived in his memory the minutest incidents of childhood, and these are sometimes expressed with the clarity of the prose of statement. Moreover, his meticulous artistry gives a coherence to the visions in their transplantation to the written page. His attempt to communicate the substance of his visions is indeed the glory of De Quincey's prose. The rich imagery was stimulated by the effort to place before the reader a reconstruction of his mystical experiences.

The images of the veil, the screen, the curtain, which are characteristic of De Quincey's prose, are favourite ones with the mystics. They believe that man can only mount to the world of the spirit when his trappings on earth have been shed, when the body is forgotten and the soul stands supreme. Darkness is associated with this, and mists, clouds, bad weather, and solitude, since all these intensify the sense of the mystery of the universe, of the awe of God brooding over the heart. De Quincey's awe of the

desert and the ocean is related to this. He saw them as the two most perfect forms of human solitude. He believed that the mind is exalted and enlarged by the strife of life, by the fearsome forces in nature. "Arcadian life", he said, "rests upon the false principle of crowding together all the luscious sweets of rural life in our climate".¹ De Quincey's imaginative power is drawn forth by lone individuals, by the pariahs of society, by those who suffer. The prostitute Anne was to haunt his dreams for ever.

The source of De Quincey's mystic experiences was his childhood of fear and torment, his vivid and strong imagination, and his deep religious faith. Yet, with the element of mysticism, there is a strong element of the intellectual in his works. He had been a brilliant undergraduate at Oxford University for the brief period he was there, and he was a fine scholar from an early age. On the whole, the logician, however, is subordinated to the mystic when De Quincey's imagination flies, and a stream of rich impressions flows over the page, image mounting on image as he sees God's glory.

IV. DE QUINCEY AND THE ROMANTICS

The Romantics wish to explore the world of the spirit. They wish to penetrate through the visible world to the higher world beyond, to search for a reality beyond the senses. The imagination was thus fundamental to them, and the individuality of their visions is a measure of their success. There are general trends in the Romantic movement, but there are significant differences in points of detail.

All the Romantics travelled quite extensively on the earth, and they all travel extensively in the realm of the spirit. They are acutely aware of the flux of life. The opening lines of Shelley's Mont Blanc are representative of this aspect of their thought: "The everlasting universe of things

Flows dark - now glittering - now reflecting gloom -
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
of waters - ..." ¹

They seek eternal truths behind the flux of life.

In Blake's work movement is constant. He establishes the pattern of wandering which runs through all the Romantics. The movement from a state of childlike innocence to a state of true innocence, a state which has been tested and remoulded by

1. Mont Blanc ll. 1-6.

experience, a state where the divine spirit may soar to God, is the theme of his Songs of Innocence and Experience. The Mental Traveller of 1801 is a poem symbolic of the wandering spirit of innocence. De Quincey also saw it necessary for man to be tempered by experience. By seeing and feeling the lowliness of the earth, man's sense of the divine is strengthened, and the violent and destructive powers which are aroused in his soul enable him to break his earthly bonds and ascend to God.

A journey is the structural image of many of the major Romantic poems: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The Excursion, Childe Harold, Don Juan, Endymion, Alastor, and The Revolt of Islam. Many other poems, in addition, are of a symbolic or realistic journey through life, such as The Songs of Innocence and Experience, The Prelude, and Coleridge's Youth and Age. This is one of the outstanding characteristics of De Quincey's 'impassioned prose': The Confessions, like The Prelude, is an account of the growth of a human spirit, and into all of this prose there enters De Quincey's recollections of intensely-felt moments of his life. The Spanish Military Nun, particularly, De Quincey makes the voyage of a human being on the treacherous seas of life.

The sea provides a rich source of images, and symbols, for the Romantics. It means different things to each of the poets. Keats is impressed by its fecundity, and by its vastness. A dim ocean, sprinkled with many isles, spreads before him in Sleep and Poetry:

"How much toil!

How many days! what desperate turmoil!

Ere I can have explored its widenesses." ¹

1. Sleep and Poetry 11.307-309

In On the Sea he presents a picture of the mighty swell of the sea filling and emptying caves along the shore. Then, he says:

"Oh ye! who have your eye-balls vex'd and tir'd,
Feast them upon the wideness of the sea." ¹

Coleridge also conveys the expanse of the sea, the watery desert. However, he feels an awe for it which Keats never feels. The sea is almost another character in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, an unpredictable force rolling under the feet of the mariners. Its silent presence, and their solitude in its vastness, broods over their minds. It is, in fact, personified in the image: "'Still as a slave before his lord,

The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast - '" ²

Personification is a distinctive feature of Coleridge's imagery but the sea is remarkable for being consistently personified in his verse. It is usually associated with solitude, as in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Let us, he says in Tears in Solitude, throw the French back "upon the insulted ocean".³ Yet it is these aspects of fierceness and loneliness in the sea that Byron rejoices in. The freedom and power of the ocean fill him with exultation:

"And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy
I wanton'd with thy breakers - they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea

1. On the Sea ll. 9-10

2. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner ll. 414-417

3. Tears in Solitude l. 147

Made them a terror - 'twas a pleasing fear,
 For I was as it were a child of thee,
 And trusted to thy billows far and near,
 And laid my hand upon thy mane - as I do here." ¹

Shelley has no fear of the sea, but he does not exult in its as Byron does. He recognizes, and respects, its vastness, and, like Coleridge, associates solitude with it:

"Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
 Has seen above the illimitable plain,
 Morning on night, and night on morning rise.." ²

However, it does not ^{draw} ~~evoke~~ from him the awe it ^{draws} ~~evoles~~ from Coleridge. The sea~~s~~shore is a favourite image of his, the line of demarcation between the known and the unknown. Wordsworth is the closest of the Romantics to Byron in his appreciation of the beauties of nature for their own sake, but he has a deep sense of the divine immanent in nature. Water appears in his imagery much more often in the form of a sparkling rivulet, or a rill of limpid waters, than a dark ocean. Southey, too, draws most of his water imagery from the Lake district. It is the different moods of the mountain cataract that hold an endless fascination for him.

De Quincey is akin to Coleridge in his attitude to the sea, and to water. "No excess of nautical skill", he had written, will ever perfectly disenchant the great abyss from its terrors." ³ He, too, feels a presence in the sea. It is a symbol for him of the torments in life, the great disasters which may suddenly engulf one.

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1. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Staringa 84
 2. Queen Mab 11.88-90, section VIII,
 3. Modern Superstition p. 418

The fountain is an image of significance for the Romantics. In his poem, The Fountain, Wordsworth uses its eternal flow to point the mutability of human life. The fountain to Byron is a symbol of ordered nature. He prefers nature in the raw:

"Though cataracts foam 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr." ¹

Keats associates the fountain with heaven. All lovely tales that we have read or heard, he says in Endymion, are

"An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink." ²

De Quincey enriches its meaning. The state of eternity of its waters symbolises for him the state of eternity of spiritual truths, and he associates it, strikingly in Joan of Arc, with God's manifestation of Himself or His hosts on earth.

Nature has a significance for the Romantics transcending its usefulness as an inexhaustible source of sensations and effects. It is for them not a mirror in which the life of man is reflected, but a mirror fashioned by the spirit world, through which each peers in his own way into the spirit world itself. Byron's poetry is the most realistic of that of the Romantics. Keats pointed the difference between himself and Byron in a letter to his brother George in September, 1819: "He describes what he sees - I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task." ³ Keats' task, and that of the other Romantics, is harder. They must thrust their minds through the visible to the invisible.

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1. Lachin Y Gair ll. 7-8.
 2. Endymion ll. 23-24.
 3. Letters of John Keats p. 413.

There is a dwelling on those aspects of nature which stimulate the mind of the poet to see intimations of the divine. Consequently the mountain, from its appearance of towering from the earth to the heavens, is a recurring feature in Romantic poetry. So too is the cave, holding in its bowels the secret mysteries of the earth. Keats juxtaposes the two in his image of the voice, from the cavern far below, calling to Endymion on the misty peak to descend, for "He ne'er is crown'd

With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead." ¹

The power of the Sibyl, the figure of the cave, over the hidden parts of one's soul, Keats, Byron, Shelley, and Coleridge were acutely aware of, and Byron and Wordsworth are not untouched by it.

The cave was an image of great significance for De Quincey. He has a great number of references to caves and great depths in his prose, and, indeed, Suspiria de Profundis is the quintessence of the Romantic attitude to the Sibyl. Levana² he sees as the benevolent Sibylline figure. The ministers of Levana are three Ladies of Sorrow, silent servants of God. The third Sister, the "Mater Tenebrarum" (who wears the turret like the Cybele who emerges from darkness and returns silently to darkness in Endymion) has absolute power in her dominion. Once she enters man's heart, she takes him over altogether. This awareness of a benevolent and a malevolent Sibyl is apparent in the Romantic poets. These three Sisters are almost a parallel to the "Sisters three"³ which Keats mentions in Endymion. He refers to the Fates, the Parcae, These

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1. Endymion ll. 211-213
 2. Suspiria de Profundis p. 363
 3. Endymion l. 25, Bk. III.

were Clotho, the spinner of the thread of life, Lachesis, the disposer of lots in life, and Atropos, the fate that cannot be avoided. Sometimes Atropos is represented as cutting the thread of life spun by Clotho. So here, too, there is a benevolent and a malevolent figure. As the benevolent Sibyl in Romantic poetry, she is the figure of the Garden, the primal Eve, or the ultimate Madonna. As the malevolent Circe she is a figure of the Purgatorial Passage: the seductive Lamia or the terrifying Life-in-Death; she lies in wait for her victims.

Darkness is associated with the cave, with mystery, with the depth of one's soul. Blindness is frequently used as a symbol of the inability to pierce into one's soul. Darkness seldom falls on the Romantics without there being a glint of light somewhere. Light is perhaps the most universal image of the Romantics. It is a symbol naturally appropriate to spiritual illumination, or to any other ideal to which the poet aspires. The sun, the moon, and the stars are prominent as symbols in this respect. They are eternal sources of light, and, like the mountain, they hang above the earth, high in the heavens. So for instance, the sun and the moon are controlling influences on the voyage of the Ancient Mariner, and throughout Coleridge's poetry the moon in particular seems, as a light that shines in darkness, to symbolize the work of the imagination. The sun and the moon are prominent in Blake's poetry, especially as symbols of the free play of the imagination, or of happiness. In the first "Nurse's Song", he tells how children are allowed to play in the sunlight, unrestricted and joyful. But when experience officiates, their joy is stifled:

"Your spring and your day are wasted in play,

And your winter and night in disguise." ¹

For the free play of innocence, the cold, dark, imprisoning fear of experience has been substituted. Sorrow he invariably associates with darkness, as in:

"Lo! to the vault

Of paved heaven,

With sorrow fraught

My notes are driven:

They strike the ear of night,

Make weep the eyes of day;

They make mad the roaring winds,

And with tempests play." ²

Wordsworth, on the other hand, finds a soothing peace in darkness. In his poem Written in Very Early Youth, for instance, he speaks of the harmony that comes to heal his grief by hushing his memory when night has fallen, and the sky is starless. The setting sun is a favourite image. The period of the day is the slumbering period when the mystery comes in with the lengthening shadows, blending with the lingering light to throw a soft outline on the mountains.

"How pleasant, as the sun declines, to view

The spacious landscape change in form and hue!" ³ he says in An Evening Walk. The sunset symbolizes for him the mutability of life, and yet the eternity of the powers which govern it, for

1. "Nurse's Song" Songs of Experience 11.7-8

2. Poetical Sketches 11. 9-16.

3. An Evening Walk 11. 98-99.

the phenomenon is unending. Keats, in a sonnet, appeals to a star as the emblem of permanence: "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art!"¹ he says. He feels the divine in the night, sees it in the moon and the stars. The darkness permeates his heart with its divine mystery in Ode to a Nightingale. He gives himself up to it, wishing to dissolve his fever and his fret:

"Tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways." ²

Light, whether as sun or moon or stars, for Keats, as for all the Romantics, is a symbol of the power of the imagination.

Light as a symbol of spiritual illumination blazes forth in De Quincey's prose. The pale glimmer of the moon rarely appears; when light comes it is strong and penetrating, for, in the 'impassioned prose', all is exalted for him. His visions show him the power of God, a power emblazoned in the sun, and this glory he sees in the sun, particularly in The Daughter of Lebanon, is not matched by the other Romantics, although it is a more frequent image for most of them.

The bursting forth of light is repeatedly used by the Romantics as an image associated with man's breaking free from oppression. Coleridge thus rejoices in La Fayette:

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1. Bright Star, would I were Steadfast as Thou Art! l. 1.
 2. Ode to a Nightingale ll. 35-40.

"For lo! the morning struggles into day,

And Slavery's spectres shriek and vanish from the ray!" ¹

Freedom from oppression is a common Romantic theme. The freedom of the spirit is a vital force for these poets, for the very basis of their poetry is an exploration of the mysteries of existence. Even Byron's poetry, the most realistic poetry of the major Romantics, expresses a fascination with the mysteries of nature. They write to no 'principles of correctness' such as their predecessors of the 18th century had. They insist on the importance of the individual man, and wish at all costs to be themselves.

Slavery and oppression are thus denounced passionately.

Southey sees the slave-trade as a blot on mankind:

"Go, pine in want and anguish and despair:

There is no mercy found in human-kind.

Go, widow, to thy grave, and rest thee there!

But may the God of justice bid the wind

Whelm that cussed bark beneath the mountain wave,

And bless with liberty and death the Slave!" ²

Southey is representative of the Romantics in condemning the course the French Revolution had taken. The events in France subsequent to the taking of the Bastille brought home to him with a shock the wish of the majority of men to dominate their fellows. His hopes for the Revolution had crashed, and Napoleon Bonaparte he regards as an oppressor harsher than the nobility of France had been. In a poem he wrote during the negotiations with Bonaparte in January, 1814, he speaks of Napoleon thus:

1. La Fayette ll. 13-14.

2. Sonnet Concerning the Slave Trade ll. 9-14.

"A merciless oppressor hast thou been,
 Thyself remorselessly oppress'd meantime;
 Greedy of war, when all that thou couldst gain
 Was but to dye thy soul with deeper crime,
 And rivet faster round thyself the chain." ¹

Byron, in his ⁶Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte, ⁷views him in a similar light. The arbiter of others' fates he sees as now a suppliant for his own. Byron was the most fervent exponent of freedom amongst the Romantics. The ideals of the French Revolution struck a sympathetic chord in him, which the subsequent events in France did not destroy. He was a man of action, and his death at Missolonghi is a testament to his love of adventure and of freedom.

He constantly attacks tyrants and tyranny in his poetry. He wishes men to break free from the restrictions binding them, to revolt against oppressors, and he says with ardour in Don Juan:

"For I will teach, if possible, the stones
 To rise against Earth's tyrants. Never let it
 Be said that we still truckle unto thrones; -
 But ye - our children's children! think how we
 Showed 'what things were' before the world was free!" ²

Oppression is alien to the spirit of God, he believes. May none efface the marks of Bonnivard on the prison-floor of Chillon, he says in the sonnet, "for they appeal from tyranny to God". ³ Byron pursued his instinctive cult of liberty even at the cost of personal comfort and convenience. At a time when his countrymen were proclaiming their championship and love of liberty, Byron accuses

1. Ode Written During the Negotiations with Buonaparte, ll.80-84.

2. Don Juan, ll.4-8 Canto VIII, section 135.

3. Sonnet on Chillon. 1. 14.

them of being its most violent enemies. England, on whom such great hopes were once placed, has now betrayed them:

"How all the nations deem her their worst foe,
That worst then 'worst of foes', the once adored
False friend, who held out Freedom to Mankind,
But now would chain them - to the very 'mind'." ¹

Shelley shares Byron's ideal that men should be free. His refusal to compromise with oppression is the reason behind one of his major alterations in Prometheus Unbound from his source material. He does not follow the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus in reconciling Prometheus with Zeus, or, as Shelley regarded them, the champion with the oppressor of mankind. The Greek war of independence ^{against} from the Turks, of 1821, which provoked action from Byron, provoked a lyrical drama, Hellas, from Shelley. In his vision of an ideal future world, Shelley looked upon this fight for freedom as a prophecy of the dawning Golden Age of love and freedom.

Freedom was a considerable driving force in the work of Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Throughout their poetry are scattered images of prisons and chains, the characteristic Romantic images of oppression. Coleridge, in particular, of these three, broods on the oppression he feels and sees. In his poem To a Young Ass he grieves on the tethered, half-famished condition of a young ass, a "Poor little foal of an oppressed race!" La Fayette rejoices in the French Revolution. La Fayette Coleridge sees as a man cheered like the imprisoned lark by his fellows' freedom. In Koskuisko he mourns for the

capture of a Polish patriot, the commander of the Polish insurrection of 1794 against Russia, as a reversion to oppression for the Polish people, and the crushing of a bid for freedom. The titles of This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison, and The Dungeon, speak for themselves.

The Romantics' criticism of the restrictions imprisoning the living spirit was their criticism of society, of the oppression which the factories sprouting up all over England were inflicting on the people. They saw the city-dweller as isolated from those forms of nature into which he can sink his being and proceed beyond them.

Blake was especially sensitive to this. In London he gives his own view of that 'chartered liberty' on which his countrymen prided themselves, and exposes the ugly facts. The child chimney-sweep, the soldier, and the harlot are Blake's types of the oppressed - characteristic victims of a system based not on brotherhood but on fear. This is a powerful example of Blake's sympathy for the lower ranks of society. There is a suggestion too, that the Church is in decay.

In the sonnet, London, 1802, Wordsworth deplores the selfishness which he sees has taken root and spread in England. This is an indirect criticism of the trends in society which have made men masters over vast sections of the populace.

This aversion of the Romantics to London, and to cities in general, is shared by De Quincey. London crushed him in his youth, when day after day he walked for hours on end up and down her streets. Whenever the Romantics wanted an image of blackness,

London frequently supplied it. De Quincey's spirit was haunted by his bitter recollections of his experiences in this city. She rose in his dreams "- sole, dark, infinite - brooding over the whole capacities"¹ of his heart. The oppression De Quincey feels in the city is one aspect of the oppression he feels in life. Man's voyage on earth is to him a voyage fraught with perils. He is different from the other Romantics in absorbing the strife of life into his being. He willingly surrendered himself to the tyranny of opium. The sense of oppression is even stronger in his 'impassioned prose' than it is in the poetry of his fellows. He takes the strife of life into his spirit, and, when the spirit soars in a vision, the elements of suffering are inextricably mingled with it. Even the dream phantasy The Daughter of Lebanon has De Quincey's sufferings as its basis. Ann, the prostitute of Oxford Street, has been transformed in his mind into a beautiful girl received into heaven by God.

Blake had taught that the soul gains strength from the ugly lessons of experience, that from a union of innocence and experience, the soul may pass to a more active life in the creative imagination. He stresses great and fierce powers in the soul which must be released and exercised before the imagination can penetrate to the unseen world. He chooses his symbols for these powers in violent and destructive things, such as the tiger, the wolf or the lion.

1. The Confessions p. 142.

De Quincey does precisely the same thing. He had said in Suspiria de Profundis, "Either the human being must suffer and struggle, as the price of a more searching vision, or his gaze must be shallow and without intellectual revelation,¹ "Violence and destruction figure largely in his works. These elements draw forth his imaginative powers, and, if the subject is a sufficiently exalted one, his vision soars from the earth to the heavens.

In the Romantic achievement of writing of man and the world largely in terms of their own inner lives, the dream plays an important part. The Romantics were great dreamers and much of their writing finds its origin in sleep, trance, or vision. The dream is a reconstruction in the mind of an individual of elements in his own life which have moved him deeply. The mysteriousness of the spirit world is associated with it. The effect is usually powerful and haunting, since the experience is intense.

Coleridge and De Quincey are the two greatest dreamers among the Romantics. Opium-eating may have intensified their dreams a little, but Miss Elizabeth Schneider in Coleridge, Opium, and 'Kubla Khan', has found De Quincey, in his diary of 1803, to have been living in a world half-neurotic and half-literary. All the 'opium' elements are already present in rudimentary form in the diary or notes. Moreover, there was a literary vogue of dreams at the time. The conclusion seems inescapable that the 'dream' writing of Coleridge and De Quincey derives far more from the coalescing of individual temperament with literary tradition than from consumption of opiates. Dream-images are particularly

1. Suspiria de Profundis p. 351.

frequent in the poems Coleridge wrote during the years 1799-1800, the years of his first real familiarity with the current German literature that was so full of them. De Quincey, too, relished German literature. Moreover, he follows the dream method of thinking by pictures in all his prose. Of his childhood he says, "Under this impulse of rapacious grief, that grasped at ^{what} ~~which~~ it could not obtain, the faculty of shaping images in the distance out of ¹slight elements, and grouping them after the yearnings of the heart, grew upon me in morbid excess."¹ His dreams have in concentrated form the typical Romantic imagery of the mode. Veils, shades, curtains, screens, phantoms, a myriad of faces and shapes - all rush upon his mind. They never lose their coherence however. Irrelevant memory-images are dropped.

The Romantics prided themselves on the individuality of their imaginative worlds, but De Quincey's world of imagination is more evidently individual than that of any other Romantic, because De Quincey himself is ever present. All is couched in his distinctive style, all has the distinctive sound of his voice. He continually places his own experiences before the reader. Even when narrating the adventures of Kate, the Spanish military nun, he refers to himself: "By daybreak she was at work with an axe in her hand, I knew it, before ever I came to this place in her memoirs."²

The individuality of the world he creates in his 'impassioned prose' - the towering scenes which are painted

1. Autobiographic Sketches p. 46.

2. The Spanish Military Nun p. 177.

as image mounts on image - is the enduring monument of De Quincey. His 'impassioned prose' has something of value to the reader, qualities which plumb the depths of one's sensibilities, and stretch the mind over vast scenes. We may not agree with his philosophy of life, but there is no denying the power and the beauty of the literature it ^{draws} ~~evokes~~ from him.

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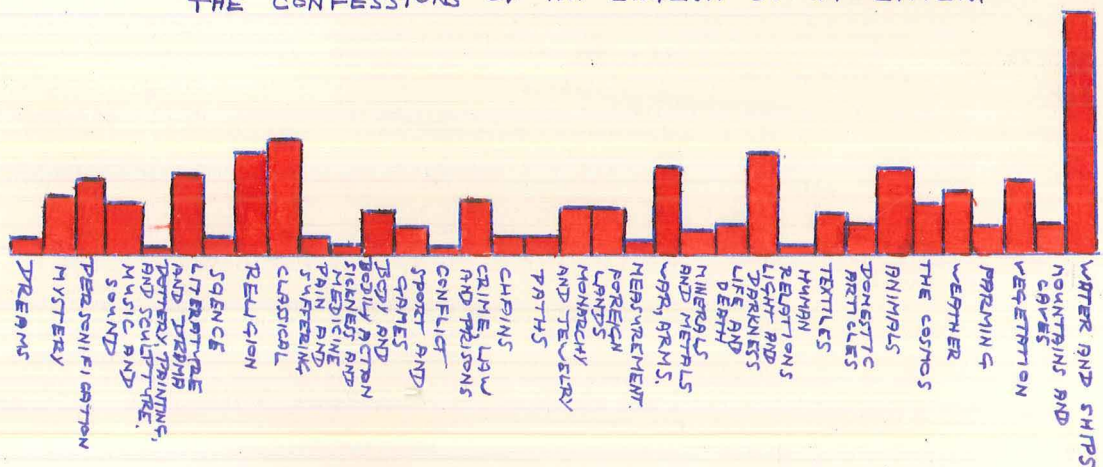
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A BLOCK DIAGRAM OF THE IMAGES IN
"THE CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER."



A BLOCK DIAGRAM OF THE ANIMAL IMAGES.
[IN PROPORTION TO THE PAGES]

